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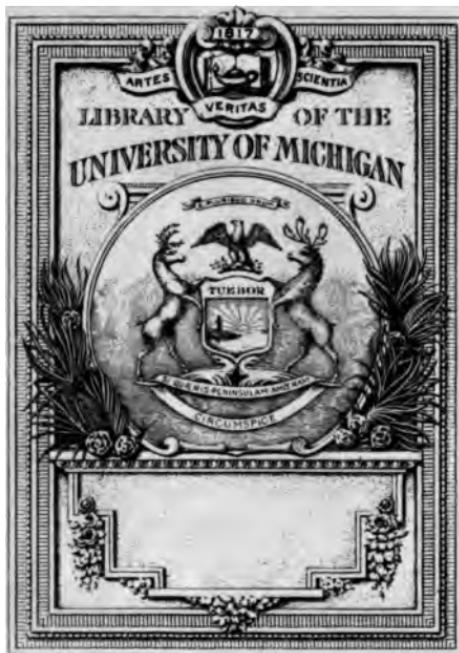
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*VIZETELLY'S ONE-VOLUME NOVELS.*

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XXV.

**MY BROTHER YVES.**

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*VIZETELLY'S ONE-VOLUME NOVELS.*

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XXV.

# MY BROTHER YVES.

BY

PIERRE LOTI.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY MARY P. FLETCHER.



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## MY BROTHER YVES.

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### I.

My brother Yves' certificate-book is like that of any other sailor. It is bound in yellow parchment, and having made many voyages in various lockers, is much soiled and worn. The cover is inscribed in large characters :

KERMADEC, 2091, P.

Kermadec is his surname ; 2091, the number under which he is registered in the navy, and P., the initial letter of Paimpol, the port where he was entered.

If we open it, we shall find, on the first page, the following particulars :—

“Kermadech (Yves-Marie), son of Yves-Marie and Jeanne Danveoch, born August the 28th, 1851, at St Pol-de-Léon, (Finisterre). Height, 5 ft. 10. Brown hair, eyes and eyebrows, nose, chin, and forehead of the ordinary type ; face oval. Special marks : tattooed on the left breast with an anchor, and on the right wrist with a bracelet and fish.”

Tattooings of this sort were still in fashion, ten years or so ago, among good old salts. Those executed by the idle hands of a friend on board the *Flora* have become a subject of mortification to Yves, who has more than once tortured himself in the hope of getting rid of them. He cannot bear the idea

that he is indelibly marked and may be recognised, as long as he lives, and wherever he may go, by these little blue designs.

If we turn to the next page, we shall find a series of printed leaflets setting forth, in neat and concise style, all the misdemeanours of which a sailor may be guilty, accompanied by the list of punishments he will incur, beginning with the trivial faults for which a few nights in irons will atone, and ending with the great mutinies punishable by death.

Unfortunately, these documents for daily perusal have never succeeded in inspiring sailors in general, nor my poor Yves in particular, with the salutary terror so desirable.

Then follow several manuscript pages containing the names of ships, with blue seals, numbers, and dates. The pursers, being men of taste, have adorned this part with elegant flourishes. Here we find his cruises recorded, with details of the pay he has at various times received.

Here are the early years when he earned fifteen francs a month, and kept ten to give to his mother; years which he passed with the wind blowing full on his chest, living half naked in the tops of those mighty oscillating stems which serve as masts, wandering without a care on his mind over the everchanging waste of waters; then come restless years, when the passions of youth dawn and assume tangible form in the inexperienced mind, becoming realised by-and-by in brutish boozings or in dreams of touching purity, according to the character of the places to which the wind wafts him, or that of the women upon whom he happens to light, terrible awakenings of the heart and senses, great outbursts, followed by a return to the ascetic life of the ocean, immured in a floating cloister: all these things lie indicated beneath the numbers, names, and dates, which are accumulating, year by year, on a poor sailor's certificate-book. These yellow leaves contain a strange poem of adventures and sufferings.

## II.

THE 28th of August 1851 seems to have been a fine summer's day at St Pol-de-Léon, in the department of Finisterre. The pale Breton sun smiled a welcome on the little stranger who was destined to grow up with such a strong affection both for the sun and for Brittany.

Yves made his first appearance in the world as a very fine baby, plump and brown. The experienced women present on the occasion christened him *Bugel-Du*, which means *dark little child*. This bronzed tint was characteristic of the family, for the Kermadecs, father and son, had all spent the greater part of their lives at sea, and had become well tanned.

A fine summer's day at St Pol-de-Léon is something unusual in that foggy district : a sort of melancholy radiance is diffused over everything. The ancient medieval town seems to shake off its drowsy slumber under the fog and grow young once more ; the old granite glows in the sunshine ; the Creizker belfry, a giant among those of Brittany, reveals its delicate open-work carvings in grey stone, variegated with yellow lichens, as it rises against the blue sky under a flood of light : while the moorland, covered with purple heather and golden gorse, stretches on every side, filling the air with the sweet scent of flowering broom.

There were present at the baptism the godmother, a young girl, and the godfather, a sailor, and behind these came the two little brothers, Goulven and Gildas, leading the two little sisters, Yvonne and Marie, who carried nosegays.

As soon as this procession entered the ancient church of the bishops of Léon, the beadle, who was holding the bell-rope, was about to ring the joyous peal usual on such

occasions. But the curé, who chanced to arrive at the moment, said roughly :

“ For heaven’s sake, Marie Bervrac’h, don’t pull that bell ! These Kermadecs are people who never give anything at the offertory, and the father spends all his money in the tavern. I am not going to have you ring for such folk.”

And thus my brother Yves began life as a child of poverty. His poor mother, Jeanne Danveoch, kept anxiously listening in her bed, with a presentiment of something wrong, as she lay waiting to hear the vibrations which seemed so slow in beginning. She kept straining her ear, and when no sound came, she understood the public affront offered her, and began to cry.

Her eyes were still wet when the baptismal party returned, much out of countenance.

This humiliation remained in Yves’ memory for the rest of his life ; he could never forgive the unkind reception offered him on entering the world, nor the cruel tears shed by his mother ; he owed the Romish clergy a grudge, and closed his Breton heart to mother Church.

### III.

ONE December evening, four and twenty years after this occurrence, the rain was falling at Brest. It was fine, cold, penetrating, and incessant ; it streamed down the walls, making the steep slate roofs and lofty granite houses look still darker ; it poured almost merrily on the noisy Sunday crowd, which was swarming in spite of it, all wet and bedraggled, along the narrow streets in the gloomy depressing twilight.

The crowd consisted of tipsy sailors singing, soldiers stumbling along with their swords clattering behind them, and civilians coming in the opposite direction,—city workmen with a miserable and dejected air, women in little merino shawls and peaked muslin caps, who walked along with bright eyes and red cheeks, smelling of brandy; dirty old men and women who had been drinking and had fallen down,—some one had helped them up, and on they went, their backs still smeared with mud.

The rain never ceased: down it came, drenching the Breton hats with their silver buckles, the caps perched over the sailors' ears, the shakos trimmed with gold lace, and the white caps and umbrellas.

There was such an air of sullen gloom over everything, that it was difficult to imagine that a sun still existed. The thick masses of heavy cloud seemed to weigh everything down, it felt as if they could never break and reveal a sky behind. The whole atmosphere was charged with moisture, and the time of day had been forgotten, for who knew whether the darkness was caused by all this rain, or whether the winter's day was really drawing to a close?

The sailors brought a half discordant touch of youth and life into these streets, with their songs and open countenances, their large light collars, and the red tufts which contrasted well with their navy blue dress. They went backwards and forwards from one tavern to another, pushing their way and making senseless jokes at which they laughed. Sometimes they stopped under the rain spouts, in front of shops which displayed wares to suit them: red cotton handkerchiefs, in the centre of which fine ships called *La Bretagne*, *La Triomphante*, or *La Devastation* were printed; gold-lettered ribbons for their caps, complicated arrangements of cord intended for securing the canvas bags

in which they keep their clothes on board, elegant chains of plaited twine by which the sailors might hang their large knives round their necks, silver whistles for the quarter-masters, and beside these, red beltes, tiny combs, and miniature looking-glasses.

Now and then there came a gust which sent the caps flying and made the drunkards stagger, and then the rain fell all the faster, beating wildly, and pelting like hail.

The crowd of sailors kept increasing ; they might be seen surging in masses towards the head of the Rue de Siam ; they were ascending the great granite steps which led from the port and lower part of the town, and dispersed into the streets, singing as they went along.

Those who came from the harbour were even more drenched than the rest, dripping both with rain and salt water. They had hoisted sails in their boats, and came flying before the squalls, they danced across the foamy breakers, and quickly gained the shore. Now they were skipping gleefully up the steps leading to the town, shaking themselves like cats who have just had water thrown on them.

The wind whistled along the grey streets, and seemed to foretell a stormy night.

In the harbour, on board a vessel which had arrived that morning from South America, at four o'clock precisely, a quarter-master had given a long whistle, followed by scientific trills, which meant in naval language : " Man the longboat ! " Then a joyful murmur had been heard in the vessel, where the sailors were huddled together on the orlop deck to shelter from the rain. There had been some apprehension lest the sea should be too rough to allow of any communication with Brest, and they had been waiting anxiously for this whistle, which decided the question. After being afloat three years, they were to set foot again on French soil, and their impatience knew no bounds.

As soon as the men told off, in their suits of straw-coloured oilskin, had taken their seats in the boat and were symmetrically placed, the same quarter-master blew his whistle again, and ordered out the men on leave.

The wind and sea continued to rage, the further part of the roadstead was blotted out in a pale mist of clouds and rain.

The sailors on leave ran up at once, popped through the hatches, and took their places in line, as their numbers and names were called; their faces beaming with delight at the idea of again seeing Brest. They had donned their Sunday uniforms, and were giving finishing touches to their dress, assisting one another with a spice of coquetry as the torrents of rain descended on them.

When the summons "218: Kermadec" was given, a tall fellow of four-and-twenty with a serious face appeared, wearing his striped jersey and large blue collar jauntily.

He was tall and spare like an antique statue, the arms were muscular, his neck and general build were those of an athlete, and his whole appearance conveyed an impression of calm and slightly disdainful strength. The colourless face, deeply tanned, had a distinctively Breton cast, in spite of its Arab complexion. His speech was curt, with the accent of Finisterre, and the deep bass voice had a peculiar vibration, like those powerful instruments which we are almost afraid to touch lest they should give forth too loud a sound.

His hazel eyes were rather close set and sunk beneath the arched brows, with an impassive look of self-introspection; the nose was very refined and regular, while the lower lip protruded half contemptuously.

It was a rigid marble countenance, except at rare moments when it broke into a smile; then it became perfectly transformed, and it was easy to see how young Yves was. His

smile was that of one who had suffered ; it was sweet like that of a child, and lit up his harsh features as an occasional ray of sunlight does the cliffs of his native Brittany.

When Yves stepped forward, the other seamen present all looked at him with kindly smiles and unusual respect. This was because he wore for the first time upon his sleeve the double red stripe of a quarter-master, to which he had been just promoted. And a quarter-master is a figure of some importance on his vessel ; the poor woollen stripes which are so easily gained in the army, represent years of hardship in the navy ; they represent the strength and life of the young, lavished every hour of the day and night aloft in the rigging, exposed to every wind that blows.

The boatswain had come up, and held out his hand to Yves. He too had once been a top-man inured to hardship, and he knew who were strong and brave.

“ Well, Kermadec,” said he, “ and so you are going to water those stripes ? ”

“ Yes,” returned Yves in a low voice, with a grave and dreamy air.

The old boatswain was not referring to the rain, for that was sure to wet them, the watering to which he alluded was the drinking in their honour the first day they were worn.

Yves was pensively contemplating the necessity of this ceremony, because he had just made me a solemn promise to be on his guard, and was anxious to keep it.

He had had enough too of the tavern scenes which he had seen repeated in every country. Even a genuine sailor gets tired of such pleasures as spending the whole night in dens of intoxication at the head of the strongest and tipsiest, and being picked up in the gutter next morning. Besides, the day after the debauch is always disagreeable, and always the same. Yves knew this, and never wished to experience it again.

This December weather was very gloomy for the return home. However young and careless a fellow might be, such weather could not but damp the delight of the occasion. Yves had a feeling that such was the case, and it astonished and pained him ; for, after all, this was really his Brittany ; he recognised it merely from the atmosphere, and the vague character with which it invested the land.

The long-boat pushed off, bearing them towards the shore. It bowed before the west wind, and bounded over the waves with a hollow sound like that of a drum, and at each bound the salt water dashed over them as if thrown by angry hands. They were rapidly making way through a sort of cloud, whose large briny drops lashed their faces. They bowed their heads to meet this deluge and huddled close together, like sheep under a storm.

They did not speak a word, for they were all absorbed in the thoughts of the pleasures awaiting them. Some of them were young men who had not set foot on land for a year ; all their pockets were lined with gold, and terrible passions were boiling in their blood.

Yves, too, thought a little of the women awaiting them in Brest, of whom he might soon have his choice. But yet he was sad ; the poor, lonely fellow had never been besieged by so many thoughts all at once.

He had often been oppressed by attacks of melancholy like these during the silent nights at sea ; but then the return home had always figured in the rosiest hues. This was the day for his return, and now he felt more depressed than ever ; he could not understand this, for he was like a child, accustomed to receive impressions without analysing them.

He stood with his head turned from the wind, supported by the group of sailors clustered around him, unheeding the rain which trickled down his blue collar.

All these hills surrounding Brest, vaguely defined through the veil of mist, brought back memories of the years he had spent as a cabin-boy on this wide, foggy roadstead, sighing for his mother. His past life had been a hard one, and for the first time in his life he was wondering what it would be in the future.

His mother! It was true that he had not written to her for nearly two years, but that is the way with most sailors, and yet they love their mothers dearly! It is the fashion; nothing is seen of them for years, and then they turn up suddenly in their village one day with stripes on their sleeves and plenty of hard-earned money, to bring happiness and comfort to the poor, deserted little home.

They were still advancing under the icy rain, bounding over the grey waves, followed by the whistling wind and raging waters.

Yves' mind was full of many thoughts, and his eyes were fixed vacantly on his surroundings. His mother's image had suddenly assumed inexpressible sweetness; he felt that she was close at hand, in a little Breton village, under the same winter twilight in which he himself was enveloped, and in two or three days more he should be going to embrace her and give her a great surprise.

The shock of the waves, the speed and the wind, contributed to the incoherence of his wandering thoughts. He felt disturbed by the dreary aspect of his country; he had grown accustomed to the heat and limpid blue of the tropics, and here a dismal gloom seemed to overhang everything like a pall.

He was saying to himself likewise that he would have no more to do with drink,—not that it was such a bad thing after all, and a custom among Breton sailors,—but still he had made me a promise, and at the age of twenty-four, a

young fellow has had his fill of pleasure, and feels as if he ought to be growing a little wiser.

Then he thought how astonished those on board would look, especially his great friend Barrada, when he saw him return the following morning, walking quite steadily. The idea was so comical, that a child-like smile flitted across his grave, manly countenance.

By this time they were nearly under the castle of Brest, and under the shelter of the enormous masses of granite, suddenly entered calm waters. The boat was no longer dancing over waves, but quietly speeding forward under the rain ; the sails were lowered, and the men in yellow oilskin plying their long oars in measured cadence.

The deep dark bay which is the harbour for men-of-war was opening before them ; cannon and maritime objects of formidable appearance lined the quays. Lofty, interminable ranges of granite buildings, all precisely similar, were everywhere to be seen, rising above the black waters, and surmounting one another with symmetrical rows of small doors and small windows. Above these again appeared the first houses in Brest and Recouvrance, with their wet roofs, from which rose a little white steam, proclaiming their cold damp cheerlessness, while the wind swept all round and howled dismally.

Night was closing round, and tiny gas jets began to brighten here and there the huge masses of grey stone. The sailors could already hear the rolling of carriages and the city noises which came from the heights above, across the deserted arsenal, mingled with the songs of drunkards.

Yves had been prudent enough to entrust his friend Barrada with the care of all the money he intended for his mother, and had left it on board, only taking ashore fifty francs to spend that night.

## IV.

“ AND my husband, too, sleeps all the time whenever he gets tipsy, Madame Quéméneur.”

“ And so you are taking a little walk too, Madame Ker-vella ?”

“ I, too, am expecting my husband, who has just arrived on the *Catinat*.”

“ And mine, Madame Kerdoncuff, slept for two whole days when he landed from China, and I took too much liquor as well. Oh ! how ashamed I felt ! And my daughter fell on the steps, too !”

All these remarks are exchanged in the sing-song cadence of Brest, under old umbrellas turned inside out by the wind, by women wearing waterproofs and peaked muslin caps, as they stand waiting at the top of the great flights of granite steps.

Their husbands have returned on the same vessel which has brought Yves home to France, and they have stationed themselves there to watch, already fortified by some sips of brandy, and their eyes look half brilliant, half moist.

The old tars whom they are expecting were perhaps once excellent seamen, but, having become spoiled by staying in Brest and drinking all day long, they have married these creatures, and become inmates of the sordid slums of the city.

Behind this line may be seen other groups on which the eye can rest with pleasure : young women of modest respectable appearance—true sailors’ wives—absorbed in the joy of again greeting husband or sweetheart, and gazing anxiously into that yawning gap below, the port by which the men

must enter. There are mothers, too, who have come from the villages in their handsome Breton holiday costume, the large cap and black woollen dress with silk embroideries. The rain is damaging the beautiful clothes, which are seldom renewed twice in a lifetime, but they must be worn to do honour to the son whom they are expecting to embrace in public.

“Here come those from the *Magicien*; they are entering the harbour, Madame Kerdoncuff!”

“And here come those from the *Catinat*! They are following one another, Madame Quéméneur!”

The boats are just touching the black quays below, and the men expected are the first to ascend the steps.

First come the old men expected by the line in front; pitch and tar, wind, tan, and brandy have wrinkled their faces like those of monkeys. Off they go, arm and arm with the women, towards Recouvrance, into some of the gloomy old streets with the high granite houses; there they will soon be mounting into a damp chamber with a sickly musty smell, where dusty shells and bottles may be seen lying on some of the furniture, mingled with Oriental china. And, thanks to the spirits bought in the dram-shop below, they will feel themselves twenty once again, and forget their cruel separation.

Then follow the young men for whom the sweethearts, wives, or aged mothers are waiting, and finally, ascending the granite steps four abreast, comes the party of great lads in wild spirits whom Yves is leading to celebrate his promotion.

There are women awaiting them too, in the Rue des Sept-Saints, who have come to their doors to look out: women with hair cut short and frizzled over their eyes,—with voices that tell of drink, and horrible gestures.

The sailors' continence, money, and strength will soon be all at their mercy. The men are liberal on the day they land, and besides what they give, they can be robbed when they have reached a certain stage of intoxication. They are looking before them now with an air of indecision, half startled and intoxicated already by the mere feeling of being on land.

Where are they to go and begin their pleasure? This wind, the chilly winter rain, and the gloomy approach of nightfall, all enhance the joy of getting home to those who have a fireside to return to. It makes them feel the necessity of shelter and warmth: but where are the poor lonely exiles to find these?

They wander about at first, linking their arms, laughing at everything, lurching right and left, looking like captive animals suddenly let loose.

Then they turn in at Madame Creachcadec's, who keeps a tavern in the Rue de Siam called *A la descente des navires*. The warm air within smelt of brandy. There was a coal-fire in an open grate, and Yves seated himself in front of it. It was two or three years since he had sat on a chair. And then the fire! How he enjoyed the novel comfort of drying himself before it! That is a thing never to be done on board ship, not even in the great cold of Cape Horn or of Iceland; even under the penetrating continuous moisture of the higher latitudes there is no chance of warming or drying oneself. One has to remain damp for days and nights together, and try to keep in motion till the sun reappears.

This Madame Creachcadec was quite motherly to the sailors, as all who knew her could testify. And she was always honest in her reckonings for their dinners and entertainments.

Besides, she recognized them all. The liquor had mounted already into her large red face, and she kept trying to repeat their names, as she heard them interchanged among themselves ; she remembered perfectly having seen them in the days when they were oarsmen on the *Bretagne* ; she even fancied she remembered them as cabin-boys on the *Inflexible*. But what fine tall fellows they had grown since then ! If she had not such an excellent memory, how could she ever have recognized them after such changes !

And meanwhile, at the other end, their dinner was cooking upon stoves which gave forth an appetizing smell of soup.

A great noise was heard outside. A party of sailors arrived, singing with loud voices, to a merry air, the words used in the church services : *Kyrie Christe, Dominum nostrum, Kyrie eleison.* . . .

In they came, upsetting the chairs, while a gust of west wind extinguished the flame of the lamp.

*Kyrie Christe, Dominum nostrum.* . . . The Bretons did not admire this style of song, picked up no doubt on the confines of some large town. Still the discordance between the words and music was droll, and made them laugh.

This party had just landed from the *Gauloise*, and recognized some of the others ; they had been cabin-boys together. One of them came up to Yves and embraced him ; this was Kerhoul, who had occupied the next hammock to his on board the *Inflexible*. He too had grown tall and strong ; he was on one of the Admiralty's whalers, and having conducted himself well, had long worn the red stripes on his sleeve.

The tavern was very close, and it was very noisy inside. Madame Creachcadec brought some smoking hot wine, which had been ordered as a prelude to the dinner, and heads were already becoming a little turned.

There was plenty of noise in Brest that night, the patrol found their hands full. Songs and shouts resounded along the Rue des Sept-Saints and the Rue de Saint-Yves until morning ; a horde of barbarians might have been let loose, or the bands of ancient Gaul ; there were scenes of revel worthy of primitive times.

The sailors sang, and the women, who were expecting the pieces of gold, looked excited and dishevelled on this lucky occasion, while their shrill notes blended with the bass voices.

Those who had just come ashore were easily distinguished by their more deeply bronzed cheeks and free manners ; besides they carried foreign objects about with them ; some had parrots in cages, drenched, of course, and others led monkeys.

These sailors sang terrible things at the top of their voices, with an easy sort of lilt, but sometimes they were airs from the south, Basque songs, or else plaintive Breton melodies which seemed a legacy from Celtic days.

The right-minded and inoffensive sang part-songs, grouping themselves according to their villages, and repeating in their own language their long national laments, their fine voices sounding fresh and sonorous even in this intoxicated condition. Others were stammering like little children and embracing one another, or, with unconscious strength, battering down doors or assaulting the passers-by.

Night was advancing ; only houses of ill repute remained open now, while outside the rain was still descending on exuberant savage merriment.

## V.

Six o'clock the following morning. A black mass of humanity lay in the streaming gutter, at the edge of a half-deserted street overhung by the ramparts. It was still dark ; the fine cold rain was still falling, and the same wintry wind still blew, after having howled all through the night.

It was a spot far down, a little beyond the bridge, under the high walls, the part to which homeless sailors always turn when dead drunk ; they have a vague intention of returning to their ship, and fall by the roadside.

There is a faint light in the sky, a wan gloomy dawn, as the winter morning breaks on the granite walls. The water was trickling over a prostrate human form, and rushing into the opening of a sewer hard by.

It becomes rather lighter, as faint rays make their way over the high granite walls. The black object in the gutter is really the body of a large man, a sailor, who had lain down and stretched out his arms.

There is a clattering of wooden sabots over the hard pavement, as the first passer-by lurches along ; then comes another, followed by several more. They all move in the same direction, towards a lower street leading to the gate of the arsenal.

The sound of these sabots soon swells into a strange, fatiguing, continuous noise, breaking the silence like a nightmare. Hundreds and hundreds of sabots, starting before daybreak from various quarters, clatter down this lower street ; it is a morning procession of the worthless sort ; these are the workmen on their way back to the arsenal, still staggering from

the effects of the liquor they took last night ; their gait is unsteady, and the expression on their face brutish.

Ugly, wan-faced women, with dripping garments, are also to be seen, moving hither and thither as if in search of some one ; they are examining these faces under the large Breton hats in this dim light, to see whether a husband or son has come out of the tavern at last and is going to his day's work.

They examined the man lying in the gutter ; two or three of them stooped down to get a better view of his face. The features of which they caught sight were young but hard, and looked almost as rigid as those of a corpse ; the lips were contracted, and the teeth locked. No, they did not know who he was, but it was no workman ; he wore the sailor's blue collar.

One of them, however, who had a son at sea, tried, out of kindness, to pull him out of the water, but found him too heavy. "What a carcase !" said she, as she let go his arms.

This body, on which the rain had been falling all night, was that of Yves.

A little later on in the day, when it was really light, some of his companions passing that way recognised him and carried him off. They laid him, soaked as he was, in the bottom of the long-boat, wet with salt spray, and soon sailed off.

The sea was rough and the wind high. They had to beat about a long time, and had much difficulty in reaching their vessel.

## VI.

YVES gradually came to himself towards evening, awaking with painful sensations, a twinge running through each member in turn as he recovered the use of it, much as if he were coming to life again. He felt chilled to the marrow.

He was numb and bruised too, after lying for hours on a hard couch ; then he made a first half-conscious effort to turn over. But his left foot, which suddenly gave him great pain, was caught in something rigid, against which it seemed useless to struggle. Ah, he recognised the sensation ; he knew now that he was in irons.

He was well acquainted with the inevitable morrow of these grand nights of revel ; to be riveted to this bar by a ring for days ! He could guess where he found himself, without taking the trouble to open his eyes ; this narrow hole like a cupboard, dark and damp, with a musty smell, and a pale light entering through a hole above : it was the hold of the *Magicien* !

Still he confounded this day with many a similar one elsewhere, many a league away, in American or Chinese ports. Was it for fighting the *alguazils* of Buenos Ayres that he found himself here ? or for that bloody tussle at Rosario ? or that fray with the Russian sailors at Hong-Kong ? He could not remember, and had no idea which country he was in.

The *Magicien* had been transported by the winds and waves to every possible country ; they had tossed, rolled, and bruised her externally, but they had not succeeded in shaking loose all the things in the hold, the coils of suspended rope, or the diver's dress, which was sure to be hanging behind him with its goggle eyes and walrus face, nor had they altered its perpetual smell of rats, damp, and tar.

He still felt the cold, which seemed to pierce him to the bone, and he came to understand that both his clothes and body were wet. He had some vague recollection of the rain of the preceding evening, the wind, and the leaden sky. Then he could no longer be under the sunny skies of the

Equator ! No, he remembered now, this was France, the return to Brittany so eagerly anticipated !

But what could he have done to be here in irons, when he had only just reached his native land ? He tried to think, but could not make out. At length a shadowy recollection, like a dream, flashed across his mind. While they were hoisting him on board he had been partly roused, and said he could get up quite well by himself, when, as ill-luck would have it, he saw before him a certain old mate for whom he had a particular dislike. He began at once to call him names, then a disturbance ensued, and he knew no more, having fallen down unconscious.

And now, he should never get the leave that had been promised him to pay a visit to Plouherzel, his own village. All the things to which he had looked forward throughout his three years' exile were forfeited now. He thought of his mother, and a lump came in his throat ; his eyes dilated with terror, and became fixed in a vacant stare as a tumult of feeling took possession of him. Then he hoped it was all a wretched dream, and began to shake the bruised foot made fast in the iron ring.

At this a burst of sonorous laughter vibrated through the gloomy hold. A man, whose striped jersey clung close to his skin, was standing before Yves and looking at him. As he laughed, he tossed back his handsome head, and his white teeth gleamed like those of a cat.

“ So you are waking up now ? ” said this man in his sharp tones, with the Bordeaux accent.

Yves recognised his friend the gunner, and raising his eyes, asked *whether I knew*.

“ Does he know ? ” said Barrada, with a touch of Gascon irony. “ Why, he has been down here three times, and even brought the doctor to look at you ; you were so stiff that they

got frightened. And I have been stationed here to tell him if you moved."

"What for? I don't want to see him or anyone else. You are not to go, Barrada. I forbid you, do you hear?"

So this was the end of it; he had relapsed, after all, into his old vice. On the few occasions when he went ashore it was always the same, and he could not help it. It must be true, as he had heard, that it was a terrible deadly habit, and that if a man had once acquired it he was sure to be ruined. In his rage against himself, he writhed his sinewy arms till they cracked; he half rose and gnashed his teeth, and then sank back with his head on the hard boards. To think of his poor mother, so near, and yet he should not see her after looking forward to it for three years! So this was his return to France! What misery and anguish!

"You had better change your clothes, at any rate," said Barrada. "It is dangerous to remain in that wet state, and you will make yourself ill."

"So much the better, Barrada! And now leave me to myself."

His tone was harsh, and his expression morose and sinister, so Barrada, who knew him well, saw he had better go away.

Yves turned his head aside and hid his face under his upraised arms; then, fearing lest Barrada should fancy he was crying, his pride led him to alter his attitude and look straight in front of him. His eyes looked fierce in their fixed and wearied gaze, and his lip protruded more than usual, expressing the savage defiance he was ready to hurl at everything. Wild plans were seething in his brain; ideas previously conceived, in days of rebellion and darkness, were returning to him now.

He would go away like his brother Goulven, like both his

brothers ; this time he had quite made up his mind. He had been long attracted by the free roving life of the sailors whom he had met on South Sea whalers or in places of amusement in the cities of La Plata, a wandering unconstrained life, released from every restraint : the feeling for it ran in his blood, his family had experienced it.

To desert, in order to go on a foreign merchantman or a whaler, is always the dream which tempts seamen, especially the best of them, when they feel rebellious.

There are fine times in America for deserters ! Not that he himself should get on anywhere, for it was his fate to be unlucky and miserable ; but at least he should be free from restraint !

But then his mother ! Oh, well, if he deserted, he should go round by Plouherzel and call in by night to embrace her. That was just what his brother Goulven had done, long ago ; he could remember seeing him arrive one night, looking as if he must hide somewhere ; they had kept every door shut during that last day he spent at home. True, their poor mother had cried a great deal. But how can a man struggle against his fate ? And how proud and determined his brother Goulven looked !

With the exception of his mother, Yves hated every one in the world at that moment. He thought of the days he had already passed in the service, in the seclusion of a man of war, under the lash of discipline, and he asked himself what was the good of it all. His heart was brimming over with bitter despair, longings for vengeance, a rage to be free. And since I had been the cause of his engaging himself for five years more in the navy, he included me in his general resentment.

Barrada had left him, and the December day had closed in. No grey light fell now through the hatchway into the hold, only a freezing atmosphere of fog descended from above.

A man had come to light a lantern placed inside an iron cage, and all the objects in the hold became dimly visible. Yves could hear the usual evening sounds above his head, the hammocks being slung, and then the first cry from the men of the watch marking the half-hours of the night. The wind was still howling outside, and as human sounds died away, the inarticulate voices of nature become more audible. There was a continuous howl in the shrouds above, and the waves roared and shook everything now and then, as if in a fit of impatience. Every shock sent Yves' head rolling on the damp boards, and he had placed his hands underneath to break it.

The sea too was sullen and boisterous that night, and the water might be heard bumping against the timbers all along the vessel. No one was likely to enter the hold again at that time of night. Yves lay all alone on the ground, fastened to the bar, with an iron ring round his foot, and his teeth began to chatter.

## VII.

IN another hour, however, Jean Barrada reappeared, affecting to have come to arrange one of the tacklings used for the cannon.

This time Yves called to him in a whisper: "Barrada, you might give me a drop of fresh water."

Barrada went at once in search of the little pannikin which he slung from his belt during the day and kept in one of the cannon by night, and into this he put some water which was the colour of rust, having been brought from La Plata in an iron chest, with a little wine stolen from the steward's room, and a little sugar from the captain's pantry.

Then he raised Yves' head tenderly and kindly, and gave him to drink.

"And now," said he, "will you change your clothes?"

"Yes," replied Yves in a low voice almost like that of a child, which contrasted comically with his recent manner.

Two of them undressed him, and he submitted like a child. They gave his chest, arms, and shoulders a good rubbing, and then put him on dry clothes, and laid him down again with a sack under his head to make him more comfortable.

When he thanked him, his face relaxed for the first time into a sweet smile. A change had come over him; his heart was softened, and he became himself again. His sullen fit had not lasted very long this time.

When he thought of his mother it touched him to the quick and he felt inclined to cry; something like a tear, indeed, stood in his eye, though he had long outgrown such signs of weakness. Perhaps he might yet find a little indulgence on account of his good conduct on board, his courage under toil, and the hard work he had done at critical times. If this could only be, and they did not make his punishment too severe, he would really never offend again, and atone for his recent outbreak.

His mind was made up this time. If he drank one glass of brandy after his long abstinence at sea his head was turned at once, and then he felt obliged to take more and more. But supposing he never began or tasted a drop, he should be sure to keep straight.

His penitence was as sincere as that of a child, and he believed that if he could but escape this once the terrible court-martial which sends sailors to prison, this would be his last grave offence.

He rested his hopes partly on me and wanted to see me, so he asked Barrada to go and find me.

## VIII.

YVES and I had been friends for seven years when he played this prank on his return home.

We had entered the navy by different doors ; he had been in it two years before me, although he was my junior by several months.

On the day I arrived at Brest, in 1867, to don that first stiff canvas suit which I can see now, I chanced to meet Yves Kermadec at the house of someone who befriended him —an old commandant who had known his father. Yves was then a boy of sixteen. I was told that he was about to enter the service after having been a cabin-boy for two years. He had just returned from his home, his eight days' leave of absence having expired, and his heart seemed heavy after parting from his mother for so long a time. This, and our age, which was nearly the same, formed a bond of sympathy between us.

Later on, when I had become a midshipman, I fell in again on my first ship with this Kermadec, who had grown into a man and become a regular seaman.

Then I chose him for my hammock-man, the sailor who would have to hook up my little swinging bed every night and take it down in the morning.

Of course, before the hammock is unslung, its occupant must be aroused and asked to leave it. It is usual to announce this by saying, " Hammocks down, captain," a phrase repeated over and over again till it takes effect, after which the little bed is carefully rolled up and carried away.

Yves discharged this duty very satisfactorily, besides which, we met daily over our work in the tops.

In those days there was a certain intimacy between the midshipmen and sailors, especially during long voyages such as that on which we were bound, and our relations became very cordial.

When we went on shore and found ourselves in strange scenes, where we occasionally chanced on our men by night, we applied to them for help in case of peril or unlucky adventure, and, when thus banded together, found ourselves masters of the situation.

In cases like these Yves was our most valuable ally. He did not figure to great advantage on the ship's books. The entries would be of this nature: "Exemplary while on board; a capable man and excellent seaman; but his conduct on shore dreadful." Or again: "Displays wonderful courage and devotion," followed by "undisciplined, refractory." Or else: "Zealous, honourable, and faithful," and further on, "incorrigible, &c." It was impossible to reckon the nights he had spent in irons and the days in confinement.

In a moral as in a physical aspect, he was fine, strong, and noble, but some of the details were irregular.

On board he was the indefatigable seaman, always industrious, vigilant, nimble, and tidy.

Ashore, he was always the lurching, riotous, tipsy sailor; the man picked up in the gutter next morning, half naked, stripped of his clothing as if he had been a corpse by the negroes, or else by Indians or Chinamen. Sometimes, too, he became the mad sailor who fights the police or brandishes his knife against the *alguazils*—in short, always in hot water.

At first I was amused to see what this Kermadec would do. When he went ashore with his company, we midshipmen used to say: "What fresh story shall we hear to-morrow morning? In what condition shall we see them return?"

And I used to say to myself: "For the next two days at least I shall have no one to look after my hammock."

Not that I cared much about this, but Kermadec was so devoted to me and seemed such a good-hearted fellow, that at length I had grown quite fond of the tipsy rollicking sailor. I ceased to laugh as I had done at his dangerous pranks, and should have been glad to prevent them.

At the end of our first voyage we parted, and then chanced to meet again on another vessel, when we began almost to have an affection for one another. And then, on this second long voyage, two circumstances happened to rivet the bond.

The first occasion was one morning at Montevideo, before daybreak. Yves had gone ashore the evening before I arrived at the quay, in a boat manned with a crew of sixteen, in order to lay in a supply of fresh water.

I can recall the fresh morning twilight, the clear sky in which the stars still glimmered, and the deserted quay we were skirting, as we rowed gently along in our search for the spring, and the great city which had a half-European look, with a touch of the savage still clinging to it.

As we passed, we saw the long, straight, wide streets opening out one after another under the dawning light. At this early hour no lamps were burning, and all sounds were hushed; here and there a homeless wanderer might be seen roaming in a purposeless manner, while the dangerous taverns lying on a line with the sea, large wooden buildings smelling of spices and spirits, lay closed and black like tombs.

We lay to in front of one called the *Independancia*. The stifled sounds of a Spanish song issued from the interior; the street-door stood half open; two men stood outside, fighting with knives, and a tipsy woman might be heard vomiting along the wall. On the quay lay piles of freshly-skinned hides from the pampas, contaminating the sweet pure air with a stench like that of venison,

A singular party was issuing from this tavern ; four men carrying one who seemed to be dead drunk and unconscious. They were hurrying towards the ships, as if afraid of us. We knew the game practised in infamous places along this coast ; how they intoxicate sailors, make them sign some reckless engagement, and then carry them on board when they can no longer stand upright. Then they hoist sail and make off at full speed before the man can come to himself, and there he is, fast in an iron yoke, to be taken like a slave on some whaling expedition, far from all inhabited lands. When once they get him there, there is little danger of his escaping, for his country regards him as a deserter,—he is lost.

We had reason therefore to regard this party with suspicion. They were making off like thieves, and I said to our men : “Let us pursue them !”

Upon this, they let go their burden, which fell to the ground with a thud, and took to their heels.

This burden was Kermadec. While we were picking him up and recognizing him, his captors had made their escape and barricaded themselves in the tavern. The sailors wanted to break open the doors and take the place by storm, but this would have involved us in serious complications with the State of Uruguay.

Yves was saved, and that was the main point. I brought him back to the ship, lying on a cloak stretched on the goat-skins which contained our provision of fresh water.

The service I had rendered him rivetted the bond between us.

The other occasion was at Pernambuco. I had lost money in playing cards with some Portuguese in a gaming-house. My debt of honour was to be paid the following morning, and as neither I nor any of my fellow-midshipmen had any money left, I was much embarrassed.

Yves had taken the matter greatly to heart, and came at once to offer me his money, which was put into my keeping in a drawer of my desk.

“ I should be so pleased if you would take it, captain ! I don’t want to go on shore again, and you would really do me a service, as you know, if you prevented me from being able to go.”

“ I should be very glad to accept the loan of your money for a few days, my dear Yves, since you are so kind as to offer it ; but even if I did, I should still be short of a hundred francs. So, you see, it would not be worth while.”

“ A hundred francs more ? I think I have that much at the bottom of my bag.”

And off he went, to my great astonishment. It seemed so unlikely that he should have another hundred francs at the bottom of his bag.

It was a long time before he returned. Of course he could not find it. I had expected as much.

At length he re-appeared. “ Here it is,” said he, holding out his little seaman’s purse with a radiant face.

Then a feeling of dismay took possession of me, and to make sure I said : “ Yves, will you lend me your watch as well ? I have pledged mine.”

He looked uneasy, and said it was broken. My surmise was correct ; he had just parted with it and the chain, at half their value, to one of the quartermasters on board, in order to raise the hundred francs.

Thus Yves knew that he could call upon me at any time, and when Barrada brought me his message, I went down into the hold to see him in irons.

But he had got himself into serious difficulties this time by knocking down the old mate, and, in spite of my intercession, his punishment was severe. He had to sail again four months afterwards without having visited his mother.

Before we embarked together on board the *Sybille* for a voyage round the world in three hundred days, I took him with me one Sunday to St Pol de Léon, by way of consolation. It was all I could do for him, his Plouherzel lying far away from Brest, in the Côtes-du-Nord, in a remote part of the country, to which no railway had yet been made that could have taken us there in the day.

## IX.

*May 5th, 1875.*

YVES had dreamt for years of re-visiting St Pol de Léon, his birthplace.

From the time we had navigated those foggy waters, often as we stood out to sea, rocked by the grey surf, we had seen the ancient belfry of Creizker rising on the dark horizon above the melancholy uniform ridge of land which represented Brittany, the country of Léon.

And during our watch at night we used to sing a Breton ditty—

“ Born down in Finisterre was I,  
St Pol’s the place that saw my birth ;  
My belfry rises to the sky,  
My country is the best on earth.

Back to my heather let me roam,  
And see the belfry near my home.”

But there seemed to be a fatality which had hitherto prevented our ever getting to this St Pol. Whenever we had been about to start, something had happened to prevent us; our vessel had received sailing orders, and off we had to go. So at last we had come to regard with some mysterious supersti-

tion this belfry of Creizker, of which we had never caught more than a distant shadowy glimpse, as its outline rose on the dark horizon.

This time, however, we seemed really likely to reach it. We had taken our seats in an old rustic *diligence*, side by side with a Breton curé, and the horses were transporting us at a tolerable pace towards the region of St Pol, so we began to believe in it.

It was an early hour of the morning at the beginning of May ; and yet it was drizzling like winter. We jolted along a winding road, up steep hills and down into damp valleys, through woods and rocks. The heights were clothed with sombre pines, while in the more sheltered parts grew tall oaks or beeches, with their fresh delicate pale green leaves, all streaming with moisture. The sides of the road were carpeted with tall daisies and other Breton flowers, the first catchflies and the first foxgloves.

As we rounded a rock, the rain and wind both ceased, and at the same time the prospect suddenly changed. An interminable stretch of flat country lay before us, a barren waste like a desert : this was the old land of Léon, at the extremity of which rises the granite spire of Creizker.

This lone waste had a charm of its own, and Yves smiled as he saw the belfry drawing nearer.

The gorse was in bloom, and the plain looked like a sheet of gold. Here and there belts of pink appeared, formed by the heather. A veil of pearly-grey haze, soft in its northern tinting, concealed the entire sky, and nothing broke the monotony of this pink and yellow country but some landmarks rising against the distant horizon, the outline of St Pol and its three black belfries.

Some little Breton girls were driving flocks of sheep before them through the heather ; lads were frightening them by

careering about on bare-backed horses ; country vehicles passed, laden with women in white caps going to attend mass in the town. The bells were ringing, and the road became full of life as we approached our destination.

## X.

WHEN we had both breakfasted at the leading inn, we found that the wintry morning had turned to a beautiful May day. In the little deserted streets, the grey walls were enlivened by branches of lilac, clusters of wistaria, and pink foxgloves, self-sown ; the sun was really shining, and everything had an air of spring.

Yves was looking about him, surprised to find that he had no recollection of his earliest years, torturing his memory, but recognizing nothing, and so becoming gradually disenchanted.

All the Sunday crowd had assembled in the main square of St Pol, and it looked like a picture of the Middle Ages. This square was overshadowed by the cathedral of the ancient bishops of Léon ; the dark stonework carvings of its massive pile seemed to brood over the place and invest it with an air of antiquity. Old-fashioned houses with gables and turrets enclosed the remainder, and the Sunday drinkers, wearing their wide felt hats awry, were seated at tables in front of the doors. This crowd, wearing the Breton dress, and full of life and movement, bore a resemblance to one of ancient times ; nothing was heard vibrating in the air but the harsh gutturals of the Celtic tongue.

Yves passed on half-absently into the church, over grave-stones and sleeping bishops. But he paused thoughtfully at the door when he saw the baptismal fonts.

“Look,” said he, “that is where I was held, and we must have lived close by, for my poor mother has often told me that, on my christening-day, when they insulted her so cruelly by not ringing the bells for me, as you know, she could hear the priests chanting from her bed.”

Unfortunately, when at Plouherzel, Yves had neglected to gain directions from his mother which might have enabled us to find the house they had occupied.

He had counted on discovering his god-mother, Yvonne Kergaoch, whom he had heard of as living in this very square. When we first arrived, we had asked for this Yvonne Kergaoch, and found she was well known. “But wherever can you gentlemen have come from? She has been dead these twelve years!”

As to the Kermadecs, no one remembered anything about them. It was not likely, when they had left the country more than twenty years since.

We ascended the Creizker belfry; it was a long climb, for it rose a great height in the sky. We disturbed a good many old jackdaws who had made their nests among the granite.

This marvellous piece of lace work in grey stone kept ascending higher and higher, and looked so frail that it nearly turned us dizzy. We ascended by a sharp spiral staircase inside the pierced belfry, and obtained extensive views through every opening.

When we had gained the summit, and stood thus isolated in the keen air and blue sky, we had a bird’s eye view of everything. Immediately beneath our feet were the jackdaws, circling round and round like a cloud, and giving us a concert of shrill cries; further below lay the ancient town of St Pol, looking very much dwarfed, with a crowd of Lilliputians swarming about its little grey streets like flies;

towards the horizon on the south lay the Breton land, ending in the Black Mountains ; and on the north was the port of Roscoff, with thousands of fantastic little rocks popping up their heads through the pale blue glassy sea which stretched far away, till it touched an equally pale sky.

We were amused in having at length succeeded in climbing to the top of this Creizker, which had so often seen us gliding by on that boundless expanse of water ; there it stood, calm, inaccessible, immutable, while we poor mariners were driven at the mercy of every wind.

The granite lace-work on which we stood thus aloft was polished, having been weathered by the winds and rains of four hundred winters. Its colour was dark grey with a tinge of pink, and there were patches on it of that yellow lichen which takes ages to grow, and is to be found mellowing all the old churches in Brittany. The hideous gargoyle, little monsters with nondescript features, which live high up in the air, were making faces in the sunshine close by, as if annoyed at us for looking at them so closely, or astonished at their own age, that they could have survived such storms and emerged once more into sunshine. All these figures had looked down upon Yves at his birth, and their benevolent gaze had also rested upon us at sea, when we could distinguish nothing but a faint black spire in the distance. And now we were making acquaintance with them.

Yves was still disappointed at having found no trace of his father or his old home ; no reminiscence of them remained either in other people's memories or his own. He kept contemplating the grey houses at his feet, especially those nearest the base of the belfry, waiting for some intuition as to the place where he was born.

We had only another half-hour to spend in St Pol before taking our seats in the return *diligence*. We had to be back at

Brest the following morning ; our ship was there, waiting to bear us away again from Brittany.

We sat down to drink some cider in a tavern close by the Cathedral, and there we again questioned the landlady, who was a very old woman. When she heard Yves' name she became quite excited.

“ Are you a son of Yves Kermadec ? ” said she. “ Oh, I knew your parents very well indeed, I can tell you. We were neighbours in those days, and when you were born they sent for me. You are very like your father ! I could not help looking at you as you came in. Not that you are as handsome as he was, though you are a good-looking fellow enough.”

At this compliment Yves glanced at me and looked ready to laugh ; and then the old woman became very loquacious, and was full of things that had happened twenty years ago, while he listened thoughtfully and seemed touched.

Then she called some other women who had been neighbours too, and they all had something to tell.

“ Bless me,” said they, “ how was it no one could give you an answer till now ! Every one must remember your parents, sir ; but the people about here are so stupid, and when they see gentlemen like you they are sure not to say much.”

Yves' father enjoyed a half legendary reputation in that part of the country as a sort of wonderfully handsome giant, who did everything differently from the rest of the world.

“ What a pity it was, sir, that a fine man like him should have been so often on the spree ! It was the drink that ruined your poor father ; but he was very fond of his wife and children for all that, he was kind and gentle with them, and every one about here liked him except his Reverence.”

“ Except his Reverence ! ” re-echoed Yves aside to me.

" You see, that is just what I told you about my christening."

" One day there was a fight in the square here about the Revolution in 1848 ; your father confronted the market people all alone, and saved the mayor's life."

" He had a big horse," said the landlady, " and it was so vicious that no one dared go near it. And when he rode by on that animal, dear me, how frightened we all were ! "

" Ah," said Yves, suddenly confronted by a very remote image, " I remember that horse now, and how my father used to take me up in his arms and put me on its back when it was tied up in the stable. This is the first time I have remembered my father ; I can partly recall his face now. That horse must have been black with white feet."

" So it was," said the old woman, " just so, black with white feet. It was a terrible animal, and only think of a sailor keeping a horse ! "

The tavern was filled with men drinking cider, and a merry clatter of glasses and conversation in Breton was going on. Some of them clustered round us.

The landlady had four little daughters, all very much alike, who looked charming in their white caps. No one would have taken them for children belonging to an inn ; they were perfect specimens of the handsome northern Breton race, and then they had the calm meditative expression of women in the olden days, such as we see in old portraits. They, too, gathered near us, looking and listening.

It was now our turn to be questioned. Yves replied : " My mother is still living with my two sisters at Plouherzel. Both my brothers, Gildas and Goulven, have gone fishing on board American whalers. I am the only one in the navy, I have been in ten years."

We had not much time to lose if we meant to go and see

the Kermadecs' old house before leaving. It was close at hand, almost adjoining the church ; they shewed us the door, and advised us to ask to go into the room on the left, on the first floor ; that was the one in which Yves was born.

By the side of the house stretched the great deserted park of the bishops of Léon, where Yves seemed to have been taken each day, as a tiny child, to roll in the grass with Goulven. The grass is very long in this month of May, and full of ox-eye daisies and ragged-robin. In the park, rose-trees and lilacs grow in tangled masses, as if it were a wood.

We knocked at the door of the house pointed out to us by the women, and the people living in it were rather surprised by our request. But they saw no reason to mistrust us, and only asked us to make no noise when we entered the room upstairs, because an old grandmother was sleeping there, and on her deathbed. Then they were so considerate as to leave us to our own devices.

We entered the large room on tiptoe, and found it poverty-stricken and nearly empty. There seemed a presentiment overhanging it of the dread visitant expected : we were ready to ask if it had not already come, as we looked anxiously towards a bed the curtains of which were drawn. Yves gazed around, trying to grasp the past and recall some faint memories. It was all in vain, however, even here he could remember nothing.

We were going downstairs and about to depart, when a faint glimmering dawned upon him.

"Ah," said he, "I believe I recognise this staircase. There ought to be a door at the bottom on that side leading into the yard, and a well on the left with a big tree, and further back, the stable, where the horse with the white feet was kept."

A rift seemed suddenly to have been made in the clouds.

Yves had paused on these stairs, and was gravely looking back into the gap which had so suddenly opened to disclose the past ; he was much impressed by finding himself wrestling with that mysterious faculty we call *memory*.

In the yard below, we found everything just as he had stated, the well on the left, the big tree, and the stable. And Yves said to me with an impulse almost of terror, while he raised his hat as if standing before a grave : "I can see my father's face distinctly now !"

It was high time for us to start ; the *diligence* was waiting.

During the whole time we were crossing that golden expanse of moorland, during the long twilight of May, our eyes remained fixed on the open belfry which we were leaving behind us, growing fainter in the gathering darkness. We bade it farewell, for on the morrow we were to sail for distant seas, where it could no longer see us pass.

"To-morrow morning," said Yves, "you must let me come to your cabin early, in order to write on your desk. I want to tell my mother all this before I leave France, and I am sure that tears will stand in her eyes when she hears my letter read."

## XI.

June 1875.

IN latitude  $20^{\circ}$ , in the region of the trade winds, about 6 A.M., a group of young men stripped to the waist were standing under the rising sun on the deck of a vessel ploughing her way over the solitary waste of blue water.

These were Yves' watch, the mizzen and bowsprit men.

They had all been washing their handkerchiefs, and having thrown them over their shoulders, were quietly standing in the sunshine to let them dry. There was still something

childlike in their bronzed faces and merry laugh, and a feline grace in their way of poising themselves, and the soft supple movements of their bare feet.

Every morning at the same hour, this group clustered together in the sunshine in this same costume, upon these same planks which were bearing them across the infinite expanse of ocean.

That morning they were discussing the face of the man in the moon, his pale image having been impressed on their minds by the preceding night. Throughout their watch they had seen the full orb hanging above their heads in the middle of the blue vault ; it had even obliged them to hide their faces, as they slept on their backs in the open air, on account of the malevolent influence it exercises on sailors' eyes, if they sleep with its beams resting on them.

Some of these men retained a fine manly carriage under all circumstances, and their appearance contrasted strangely with the childish things they did.

Jean Barrada was there, the sceptic of the party, giving a sarcastic laugh now and then as the argument proceeded, while his white teeth gleamed as he tossed back his handsome head. Clet Kerzulec, a Breton from the Isle of Ushant, was more especially interested in the human features visible on the pale disc, while big Barazère played the part of the grave student, assuring them that it was a world much larger than our own, inhabited by strange people.

The rest shook their heads incredulously, and Yves said thoughtfully : "All these are things, Barazère, about which I fancy you know very little."

Then he added in a manner intended to end the discussion, that he would go and find me and get me to explain what the moon really was, and then come back and tell them all about it.

They had not the slightest doubt as to my knowing all about the moon and everything else. Had they not frequently seen me looking at it through a brass instrument, with a pilot by my side to count aloud the peaceful minutes and seconds by night, with the monotony of a timepiece?

Meanwhile the little handkerchiefs were drying on the men's naked backs, and the sun rising higher into the blue vault above.

Some of these little handkerchiefs were all white, others were printed with patterns of different colours, and some had actually fine ships in the centre, bordered with red.

I was in command of the watch, and gave orders to shake out a reef in the topsails.

The boatswain disturbed the men by darting among them and blowing his silver whistle. Then they dispersed in a second, like a party of cats when a dog is set on them, and were swarming up the masts at once.

Yves was living in the tops. If we looked up, his tall, slender figure was sure to be descried against the sky, but he was rarely seen on deck.

I climbed up now and then to pay him a visit, not that the rules of the service compelled me to do this after I had ceased to be a midshipman, but I was rather fond of Yves' domain, where the freshest air was always to be found.

He had his own little possessions up there ; a pack of cards in a box, some needles and thread to sew with, some bananas and salad pilfered by night from the captain's stores, anything fresh and green he could pick up in his nocturnal raids (for sailors prize highly these rare dainties, which heal their gums when sore with the salt). He had his bird too, fastened by one claw, and blinking its half-closed eyes in the sun.

He called it his *parrot*, but in reality it was a large-headed owl, which had been blown on board one day by a violent

wind. Fate has many surprises in store, and who would have expected that this owl was destined to go round the world at the top of a mast !

It knew its master, and welcomed him by flapping its wings. Yves fed it regularly on his own ration of meat, and seemed to grow no thinner in consequence.

He was very much amused by the way in which it shrank back and drew itself up with an air of offended dignity, rocking its head like a bear when he looked it close in the face. He would go into fits of laughter, and say in his Breton accent : " My poor parrot, what a fool you do make of yourself ! " From this elevation the deck of the *Sybille* looked a great way off, and the *Sybille* herself a curious flattened object, something like a long wooden fish, as her fresh pine timbers lay on the deep blue water.

Through these transparent azure depths, in the very centre of our wake, a little grey object followed, always immediately behind the vessel, which it resembled in shape. This was the shark ; there are not often two following, but always one, and if it be caught, another comes in its place. It follows the vessel for days and nights together, patiently waiting to devour whatever falls into the water : refuse of any kind, and men, whether living or dead.

Some tiny swallows too would occasionally bear us company for their own amusement, picking up the biscuit we crumbled behind us upon the waters, and then circling joyously away. These are little creatures belonging to a rare species, with reddish brown bodies and white tails ; no one knows how they live at sea, always on the open ocean.

Yves wanted to catch one, and laid traps for them, but they were too wary to let themselves be taken.

We were nearing the equator, and the regular breezes of the trades were beginning to die away. They were replaced

by short squalls, followed by calm moments, when everything seemed to lie at rest under a kind of blue radiance, and then the yards, tops, and great white sails might be seen partly reflected on the rippled surface.

The *Sybille* seemed to make no way now, but to be slow and lazy, as if she had gone to sleep. In the damp heat which enveloped us even by night, everything felt drowsy. By degrees a strange calm overspread the air, and then dark, heavy clouds swept across the hot sea like black curtains. We were close to the equator.

Sometimes flights of swallows, this time very large and singular in appearance, suddenly rose from the sea, fluttering across with long, pointed, iridescent blue wings, then falling down again and vanishing altogether. This was when we ran into a shoal of flying-fish and disturbed them.

The sails and ropes all lay motionless like dead things; we were floating on like a spar.

In the tops, where Yves was, a little movement was still perceptible. In the calm, sunny air the tops continued to sway with a steady regularity which nearly sent one off to sleep. The long, gentle oscillations were always accompanied by the same flap of the drooping sails and the same creaking of the dry wood.

The heat was intense and the light brilliant; the lifeless sea assumed a milky blue tint, and became a sheet of molten turquoise.

But when the strange heavy clouds which swept down towards the sea passed over us, we were enveloped in darkness and torrents of rain.

We were now just under the equator, and there seemed to be no breath of air to waft us forward.

This gloom and heavy rain would last for hours, sometimes for the whole day. Then Yves and his friends assumed what

they called their savage costume, and sitting carelessly down under the warm rain, let it stream over them.

This generally cleared off all at once ; the black curtain might be seen passing over as it swept along the turquoise sea, and then the sunlight looked more dazzling than ever after the darkness, and the grand tropical sun soon licked up every drop of moisture ; the sails, timbers, and awnings soon looked white again, and the *Sybille* resumed her pale dry colour in the midst of the unending azure which encompassed her.

On looking down from Yves' station, the expanse of blue seemed indeed boundless. There was no limit to the limpid depths ; one felt the distance of the horizon, the termination of these waters, which looked exactly like those around us, just the same colour, with the same glassy surface. Then one realised the spherical form of the earth, which alone prevented us from seeing further.

Towards sunset, a succession of vaults seemed formed in the sky by a series of tiny golden clouds ; their vanishing perspective became gradually lost in space, it made one dizzy to follow them ; they looked like the interminable naves of apocalyptic temples. It was all so clear, that only the sea-line arrested our view of these aerial abysses ; the last tiny golden clouds touched this line, and looked as fine as an etching in the distance.

Sometimes the sky was simply streaked with long bands of gold ; bright golden clouds glowing upon a Byzantine background of dead gold, while the waters beneath assumed a tint of peacock blue, with lights like molten metal. And then all this vanished rapidly into limpid depths and shadowy hues incapable of definition.

The nights which succeeded were actually luminous. When everything lay hushed in the dead calm, the stars

above looked more brilliant than in any other part of the world.

The waters below became luminous likewise. The slightest movements made by the vessel in her slow progress, or by the shark as it turned, set into motion iridescent atoms in the still, warm depths. Then thousands of tiny flames became visible on the glassy phosphorescent surface ; tiny lamps seemed mysteriously lighted everywhere, which burned for a few seconds and then went out. These nights were suffocating, charged with phosphorus, and all our surroundings seemed pregnant with light ; these seas were teeming with latent life in a rudimentary condition, like the sullen waters of the primeval world.

## XII.

WE had left these equatorial calms behind us several days, and were gently progressing under the south trade wind, when Yves entered my cabin one morning, very eager to prepare some lines for taking birds. "The first petrels had been seen," he said.

These birds belong to the open sea ; they are closely allied to the gull, and the prettiest of their tribe, white as snow, with soft silky feathers, and the wings chequered with black and white.

The first antarctic petrels ! The mere fact of their appearance shows that we have left our northern hemisphere far, far behind, and are approaching the arctic regions of the opposite extremity of the globe.

These birds had made their appearance very prematurely, however, for we were still navigating the blue region of the trades. All day and all night we had the same warm regular

breeze, so delightful to inhale ; the same transparent sea and little white cirrocumuli, floating peacefully over the vaulted sky, and the same shoals of flying fish, flapping their long wet wings so wildly, and gleaming like blue steel in the sunlight.

There were quantities of these flying-fish, and when any of them were so foolish as to fall on deck, the sailors cut off their wings and ate them.

The evening was the time when Yves liked to descend from his top and visit my cabin, just when the watch had been changed and the hammocks slung. He used to enter very quietly, his bare feet making no more sound than a cat's. He drank a little water when he chose from an Indian water-cooler slung from my port-hole, and then put in order various things which belonged to me, or else read some story. He was particularly fond of George Sand's " Marquis de Villemere," and the first time he read it, I caught him crying towards the end of the book.

Like all good sailors, Yves was very clever with his needle, and it was droll to see a man of his appearance and figure engaged in sewing. When he paid me these evening visits, he sometimes looked over my naval wardrobe, and repaired what he thought my servant would fail to manage to my satisfaction.

### XIII.

We were still sailing on and on in a southerly course. Clouds of petrels and other sea-birds were following us now from morning till night. They were astonished at us, and yet confiding, they shrieked, struggled, and circled wildly around us, as if to welcome the large bird with canvass sails

that was entering their vast and distant domain, the southern ocean.

Their numbers kept increasing as we advanced. Besides the black and white petrels, there were pearly-grey ones, whose beaks and claws were tinged with faint blue and pink ; and black penguins, and then the big heavy albatrosses, dusky-looking birds with a stupid sheepish air, cleaving the air with their large rigid wings, and whining after us. We also saw one bird of a rare and large species, which the sailors pointed out to each other as an *Admiral*, its long wings being marked with three black stars.

The weather had changed and become calm, sullen, and thick. The southern trades had died away in their turn, and we had lost the clear atmosphere of the tropics. We were surprised by a feeling of chilly damp. It was only August, but we were encountering the cold of the other hemisphere. When our eyes swept the empty horizon around us, the north, the side of the sun and inhabited lands, still looked clear and blue ; while the south, the side towards the pole and desolate waters, was dark and gloomy.

Through my influence, a spare compartment in one of the captain's hen-coops had been conceded to Yves for his *parrot*, and every night he went and covered it with a piece of old sailcloth, lest it should suffer from the cold.

The sailors caught different sorts of petrels every day with their lines. They might be seen hanging up in rows from the mizzen shrouds, skinned like rabbits, waiting their turn to be eaten. They were left to hang for two or three days, till they had parted with all their oiliness, and then cooked.

These mizzen shrouds were the sailors' larder. Some rats even might be now and then seen hanging aside of the birds, skinned also, and suspended by their tails.

One night a terrible sound became suddenly audible, and every one ran about in great excitement. At the same moment the *Sybille* dipped and trembled, as if she had encountered some mysterious resistance.

Then even those who were not of the watch, but sleeping on the orlop deck, understood what this meant; we were encountering the high winds and violent surge, and had just entered the stormy southern seas, through which we must struggle as best we could.

The further we advanced into this gloomy ocean, the colder grew the violent wind and stormier the surge.

It became very dark as we drew near sunset. We were rounding Cape Horn; the only land visible looked desolate, and the sea and everything around us most dreary. In these wintry twilights, when people feel their especial need of a warm home and shelter for the night, we had no place of refuge; we were always watching, keeping our eyes and ears alert, while we seemed lost among the moving objects which made us roll about in the dark.

We tried to make believe we had a cosy nook in the little cabins so rudely shaken, where our swinging lamps were rocking to and fro. But there was nothing stable; we felt ourselves in a fragile little bark, wandering far from land on a vast waste of southern ocean. And we could hear nothing outside but the incessant howl of the lashing waves, and the doleful whistling of the wind.

Yves had nothing to look forward to but his poor hammock, where every other night he was allowed to get warm, and sleep in peace for a little while.

## XIV.

ONE morning, as we were entering the Sea of Celebes, Yves' owl was killed. It was a very boisterous day, and the second reef in the topsails was being taken in, when the bird got accidentally crushed between the mast and the yard.

Yves heard its hoarse shriek and flew to the rescue, but it was too late. He came down from the top, carrying in his hand the flattened body of the poor dead thing, which had quite lost its bird-like shape, and looked a mere mass of blood and grey feathers, above which a poor claw was still convulsively writhing. I could see from Yves' expression how vexed he felt, though he only showed it me and said nothing, while he bit his contemptuous lip. Then he tossed it overboard, and the shark which was following crunched it up like a minnow.

## XV.

IN the winter of 1876 the *Sybille* was in Breton waters again ; she had been lying in Brest harbour for two days, having completed her voyage round the world, and I found myself with Yves one February evening in a country diligence on our way to Plouherzel.

His mother's home lay in a very remote corner. This conveyance was to take us in four hours from Guingamp to Paimpol, where we were intending to stay the night, and from thence we should have a long walk before we could reach the village.

We were being jolted along a rough narrow road, and advancing further and further into the silent dreary-looking country. The wintry day was slowly closing in, and a fine rain blotted out the landscape in a grey mist. We passed tree after tree, their leafless skeletons flitting by in turns. Occasionally we passed a village—a Breton village, consisting of dark cottages with mossy thatched roofs, and old churches with slender granite spires ; they were melancholy isolated communities, which soon vanished in the darkness.

“I took this same journey by night eleven years ago,” said Yves ; “I was only fourteen then, and I cried a good deal. That was the time I first left my mother, and went off to engage myself as a cabin boy at Brest.”

I was accompanying Yves on this expedition to Plouherzel partly because I had nothing else to do. I had only obtained a short leave of absence, and had not time to visit my own mother this time, so I was going to see his, and make acquaintance with the village of which he was so fond.

And now I was regretting having come. Yves was absorbed in the joy of returning home, and though he had sufficient consideration for me to go on talking, his thoughts were not really with me. I felt myself a stranger in the corner of the world for which we were bound, and was oppressed by the melancholy aspect of Brittany, which I had not then learned to love.

Here we were at Paimpol, rolling over pavements, amidst dark old houses, and the diligence halted. People were waiting with lanterns, and Breton words were heard mingling with the French.

“Any one for the Le Pendreff Hotel ?” asked the voice of a small boy.

Ah, I had some recollection of this hotel ; I had rested there for an hour one June day nine years ago, the first year

I entered the service, my vessel having chanced to cast anchor for an hour in a neighbouring bay. Yes, I remembered it perfectly, a grand old house with gables and turrets, and two Dames Le Pendreff, exactly alike, in large white caps, like an old-fashioned picture. We would go to the Le Pendreff Hotel.

The house was just the same, only one of the landladies was dead. The survivor looked so old nine years since that she could scarcely age any more. The type of her face, her cap, and her placid air of respectability, all seemed a relic of the good old days.

A good supper was served in front of a large blazing fire, and our spirits revived.

Then Dame Le Pendreff, armed with a brass candlestick, led us up the granite staircase and ushered us into a very large bedroom, where two old-fashioned looking bedsteads were overhung by white curtains.

Yves began to undress very slowly, and seemed to hesitate.

"Ah," said he suddenly, as he fastened on his blue collar, "I must go. You see, I could never sleep, more's the pity, for it will be very late when I get there, it will be after midnight when I rouse them up, and that will startle them a little, just as it did when I came home from the war. But I do so long to see them, and I must go."

In his place, I should have done just the same.

All Paimpol was asleep when we emerged into the pale moonlight. I accompanied him part way, in order to shorten the evening. We had reached the open country, and Yves was walking on at a rapid pace, much excited, as he called to mind other occasions on which he had returned home.

"Yes," said he, "when the war was over, I came just like this, and woke them up at two o'clock in the morning. I had come from St Brieuc on foot, and was returning, very

exhausted, from the siege of Paris. You may think how young I was then ; I had only just become a real sailor. I had a great fright too that night ; when I reached Kergrist Cross, which we shall soon see at the turn of this road, if there was not an ugly little old man standing against it, who looked at me and held up his arms, but never stirred ! I was sure it was a ghost, for he suddenly vanished, shaking his finger as if beckoning me to follow."

We were just nearing this Kergrist Cross, and saw it rising before us like a figure emerging from the darkness. But there was no one crouching at its foot.

At this point I parted with Yves and retraced my steps, as I was not going on to Plouherzel. When we had each lost the sound of the other's footsteps in the silence of this winter's night, we began to think again about the little dead man, and to peer involuntarily into the dark bushes.

## XVI.

I OPENED my eyes next morning in Dame Le Pendreff's spacious bedchamber. The Breton sun was trying to gleam through the windows. It must be very fine outside.

After the few minutes I always spend in asking myself in what corner of the globe I am awaking, Yves came into my head, and I heard the clatter of innumerable sabots outside. There was a great fair at Paimpol that day, and I dressed myself like a common sailor in order not to scare the new friends to whom I was to be introduced as a seaman from the south. My costume and story had been all arranged with Yves.

I went out on the steps in front of the hotel, where the

sun was shining. The market-place was full of people—sailors, peasants, and fishermen. Yves was there too ; he had returned at daybreak with all his relations from Plouherzel, who were coming to the fair, and was waiting outside to take me to his mother.

She was a very old woman, who held herself erect, and looked rather proud in her peasant's dress. Her eyes were something like those of Yves', but they looked fierce. I was astonished to find her so aged ; she looked over seventy. It is true that country people age early, especially when they have had to toil hard, and gone through a good deal of trouble.

She could not understand a word of French, and hardly looked at me.

But there were a great many cousins and friends, who all looked very blithe, and welcomed me cordially. They had come from long distances, leaving their little mossy cottages scattered throughout this wild country, in order to see this grand gathering in the town. I had to drink cider or wine with them all ; there was no end to it.

The noise went on increasing, and hoarse-voiced ballad-mongers were singing dreadful things in Breton, under their red umbrellas.

Then an individual arrived whom Yves had often mentioned to me as his old playfellow Jean ; they were brought up in neighbouring cottages, and met again as sailors in the French navy. He was a young fellow of about the same age as ourselves, with a good-looking, open, intelligent face. He gave Yves a most affectionate embrace, and introduced us to Jeannie, who had been married to him a fortnight.

Yves lavished all sorts of attentions and caresses on his old mother ; they told each other all manner of things in Breton, and spoke both at once. He made some apology, but it did

one good to see and hear them. Her face was not hard when she was looking at him.

Country folk have always some interminable business at their lawyer's ; I left them all going to the one at Paimpol for a lengthy conference.

I had quite made up my mind not to take up my quarters at the cottage till the morrow, in order that they might enjoy their first day all by themselves, so I went off for a good long walk alone.

## XVII.

I HAD been walking for more than an hour, and having chanced to follow the same road along which I had accompanied Yves the previous day, I had again passed that Kergrist Cross.

Paimpol and the sea, and the islands, and the headlands covered with sombre pine-trees, were all lost to sight now, concealed by some rising ground ; a wilder country lay before me.

This February day was very calm and dull ; the air was almost mild, and there were patches of blue overhead, but a slight haze veiled this Breton sky as usual.

I went along some damp lanes, hedged in, according to custom, by high banks of earth, which deprived them of any view. The short grass, the verdant moss, and naked branches, all spoke of winter. At the corners of all these roads, ancient Calvaries extended their grey arms ; they were covered with rude carvings, with which the centuries had dealt whimsically ; these represented the instruments of the Passion or distorted Crucifixions.

Here and there a thatched cottage appeared, covered with

emerald moss, and half concealed by the soil and dead branches. The trees were all stunted, stripped bare by the frosts and blown by the wind from the sea. Not a soul was to be seen, and everything was silent.

I came to a grey granite chapel, surrounded by beech-trees and gravestones. This I recognised, though I had never seen it: it was the chapel of Plouherzel! Yves had often talked to me about it on board ship during our nights on watch, those clear nights in distant seas when a sailor's thoughts veer homewards. "When you reach the chapel," he used to say, "it is close at hand; you have only to take the path to the left, and walk on about two hundred paces, and you will reach our house."

I turned to the left, and came to a cottage by the roadside. It was a low cottage, standing by itself under some old beech-trees.

It commanded an expanse of dreary landscape which ended in a blurred distance. There was a sweep of monotonous plain with some shadowy trees, and a salt water lake left by the receding tide, an empty lake hollowed in the granite rock, thick with seaweeds of various kinds, and an island in the centre.

This strange island was a single block of granite, polished, and bearing some resemblance to a large animal crouching. The eye wandered on in quest of the real sea, which was sure to return to these deserted reservoirs, but it was nowhere visible. A dull cold fog brooded over the horizon, and the wintry sun was about to set.

Poor Yves! So this was his solitary cottage by the roadside; a poor little Breton cottage, very low, standing at the turn of an obscure lane, under a gloomy sky, half sunk in the ground, with little ancient granite walls covered with moss and pellitory.

This is the centre of all his childhood's memories ; this was his half-savage cradle, his nest, the much-loved home where his mother dwelt, and to which his thoughts always recurred in distant lands, in great American or Asiatic cities. He thought with affection of this tiny corner of the world during fine calm nights at sea, and during the noisy revels of his roving life. It was a poor lonely cottage at the turn of a lane, and nothing more.

This was what he always saw in his dreams on shipboard ; these damp old walls, green with pellitory, standing under a rainy sky in the sullen landscape of the Goëlo country ; and the neighbouring cottages where kind-hearted old women in caps used to pet him when a boy ; and the granite Calvaries at the corners of the roads, worn by so many centuries.

What a dismal country it was ; it made me feel quite dejected !

I knocked at the door, and it was opened by a young girl not unlike Yves.

I asked whether this was where the Kermadecs lived.

"Yes," said she, timidly, a little surprised, and then added : "Are you the gentleman who is my brother's friend, and came with him from Brest last night ?"

She was a little uneasy when she saw that I had come alone. I went in, and saw the chests and Breton beds, and the old plates arranged on the shelves. It all looked neat and clean, but it was a very humble cottage.

Yves had often said : "All our relations are well-to-do ; we are the only poor set in the family."

One of their cupboard beds was shown me, which contained two berths, which had been made ready for Yves and myself. I was to occupy the upper shelf, which was hung with coarse red moreen curtains, very clean and stiff.

"Don't go away, sir ; they will soon be back from town."

But I declined remaining at Plouherzel that day, and took my departure.

Half-way to Paimpol, just as night was falling, I could descry a large blue collar in the distance, in a little carriage that was driving briskly back to Plouherzel. Jean, the friend, was bringing Yves and his mother home. I had only time to dart behind some bushes ; if they recognized me, I knew they would make me go with them.

By the time I reached Paimpol it was perfectly dark, and the little lamps in the streets were lighted. I tried to mix with the crowd moving about the market-place : it consisted of the sailors whom they call Icelanders, who condemn themselves to six months' exile every summer, while they go to the dangerous fisheries of the Arctic seas.

Not one of these men was alone. They walked about the streets, singing, with young women, sisters, sweethearts, or mistresses, on their arm. This picture of life and enjoyment made me realise my own complete isolation. I was walking all alone, sad, and a stranger to them all, under the borrowed costume which resembled theirs. They stared at me. "Who is he ? A sailor from a distance, looking out for a vessel ? We have never seen him amongst us."

I felt very lonely, and began suddenly to retrace my steps towards Plouherzel. After all, perhaps I should not be very much in the way if I went to warm myself at the hearth of my homely friends down yonder.

I had forgotten to dine, and on I walked at a brisk pace, fearing lest I should arrive too late, and find the cottage door closed and my friends in bed.

## XVIII.

AFTER walking for an hour, I found I had lost my way completely. All around me was darkness and the silence of a winter's night. I wandered along muddy paths without finding anyone of whom I could ask my way, any hamlet or any light. There was nothing but the dark outlines of shadowy trees, and here and there a Calvary; some of these were larger than any I had met whilst walking in the daylight.

I turned and ran back; I ran for a long time in different directions. An icy rain began to fall, driven by the rising wind. I did not trouble myself much about having lost my way, but I was longing to see a friendly face, and hastened to try and find Yves.

It must have been a late hour when I recognised the chapel of Plouherzel lying before me, with the salt water lake, on which the moon was shining, and the dark mass of the granite island rising from the pale water like the back of a big animal crouching.

The sound of voices near the chapel caught my ear. Two men were discernible in the darkness, one an athletic figure. They were Yves and Jean, holding each other by the hand, and talking most affectionately, as if they were half tipsy.

They were very much surprised and delighted to see me. Then Jean took hold of us both by the arm, and marched us off to his home.

His cottage too stood alone, not far from Yves', but it was larger, and looked more comfortable.

It was easy to see that the people here were well-to-do; the chests and beds had open-work steel fastenings, which

shone like armour. A fireplace like a monument rose at the end of the room, in which an oak log was blazing.

In front of this fire two women were sitting, Jeannie, the young wife, and the old mother in a high cap, who was spinning at her wheel.

Jean's mother was a handsome, picturesque old woman. She had helped to bring up Yves too, and she addressed him in Breton as her second child, and kissed him heartily on both cheeks.

The women had been anxiously expecting them for the last hour. They gave them an indulgent reception, in spite of their being tipsy (as sea-faring friends always are when they meet), just scolded them a little, and then set to work to get pancakes and soup for us all.

A high wind had risen over the sea, and was groaning outside as it swept over the dark desolate landscape. Now and then it came down the chimney, puffing out the bright flames; then atoms of light ash were sent whirling round in front of the hearth, half floating on the floor, like the wicked gnomes who dance all night round the Great Stones.

We felt very comfortable in front of this fire as we dried our wet clothes, and waited impatiently for the good hot soup they were going to give us.

## XIX.

THE pancakes they made us looked as large as moons; they handed them to us straight from the fire, on the end of a long ash-wood spatula shaped like an oar.

Yves let one drop on a big hen which we had not noticed on the floor, and the fowl took refuge in a dark corner, shaking off the covering with an air of peevish indignation.

I was ready to laugh, and so was Jeannie, but we durst not, as we both knew that it was a sign of ill luck.

“That big black thing again!” said the old mother, stopping her wheel and looking at Yves with an air of consternation; “Jeannie, my lass, remember to send it to market to-morrow morning; she is always prowling about when the rest are gone to roost, and something is sure to happen.”

We cut our pancakes up into small bits to put them into our porringers, and then ate them, well soaked, with our wooden spoons; and Jeannie made us all drink out of one large mug, which was filled with excellent cider.

After we had had plenty to eat and drink, Jean struck up, in a good tenor voice, a sea-song known to all Breton sailors. Yves and I sang the bass, while the old mother beat time with her head and the pedal of her wheel. It drowned the doleful sighing of the wind outside.

## I.

We sailors three put out from Groix,  
And went to sea on the *St François*.  
The wind doth howl, the wind doth blow,  
The wind from the sea torments us so.

## II.

One poor man fell into the sea,  
The others were in jeopardy.  
The wind, &c.

## III.

The white flag flew, but all in vain,  
The man was never seen again.  
The wind, &c.

## IV.

His hat was found, his pipe, his knife,  
The sea had claimed the sailor's life.  
The wind, &c.

## V.

His mother heard, and went her way  
To pray to great St Anne Auray.  
The wind, &c.

## VI.

To good St Anne she made her moan,  
Have pity, saint, restore my son.  
The wind, &c.

## VII.

But all St Anne replied was this,  
You'll meet your son in endless bliss.  
The wind, &c.

## VIII.

Then home went she, her journeys done,  
Next day she passed to join her son.  
The wind, &c.

## XX.

WHEN the time came for us to go, Yves proved to be much tipsier than we could have supposed. When he got outside, he walked into pools of water up to his knees, and could not keep straight. In order to take him home, I passed my right arm round his waist and his left arm over my shoulder, half supporting him. We could see nothing but thick darkness ; the boisterous wind beat full on our chests, and Yves could not find his way along these paths.

They were anxious about him at home, and sitting up. His mother scolded him with a harsh voice and manner, just as if he were a little child, and he went and sat in a corner, looking abashed.

Nevertheless, they would make us sup again ; such is the

custom. We had an omelette, some more pancakes, and slices of brown bread and butter. Then the whole family went to bed (first the men, then the light was put out, and the women went). There was a thick layer of oak and beech twigs spread under our mattresses. The dead leaves crackled as we sank into a hollow, which kept us snug and warm.

The wind went on howling outside, as if in angry indignation, and then moaned and died away.

When the candle had been put out, and all was in darkness, the sweet voice of a little girl began a prayer in Breton. She was a little thing of four, whom they had taken in, a child whom Gildas had had by a Plouherzel girl the last time he came to the village.

The prayer was a very long one, broken by grave responses from the old woman. All the saints of Brittany were invoked—Saints Corentin and Allain, Saints Thénénan and Thégonec, Saints Tuginal and Tugdual, Saints Clet and Gildas—and then silence ensued.

I could hear Yves' quiet breathing close by; he was fast asleep already. The fowls were roosting on a perch at the foot of our bed, and clucking in their sleep. Every now and then a cricket might be heard on the warm embers giving a mysterious little chirp. The wind was still howling round the lonely cottage; a moaning sound seemed to sweep across this whole district; a breeze that rose from the sea at night-fall, and made a monotonous murmur throughout the country at the hour of apparitions and walking ghosts.

## XXI.

“Good morning, Yves !”

“Good morning, Pierre !”

And we drew aside the curtains of our cupboard in the grey morning light.

This “Good morning, Pierre !” was preceded by a faint smile of intelligence, and uttered in a timid voice and hesitating manner, for Yves generally says “Good morning, captain !” and felt rather shy about awaking so close to me, and using my Christian name, as had been agreed on between us. We had arranged this in order to keep up appearances before the inhabitants of Plouherzel, and throw no discredit on my borrowed costume.

Both the sunshine and wind of the preceding day had vanished. It was true Breton weather this morning, and the whole country was shrouded in grey mist. The day was quite thick, and the pale light seemed scarcely able to struggle through the small windows of the cottages. The distant landscape was completely blotted out, and the air seemed full of a very fine rain.

We had to pay all the promised calls upon uncles, aunts, and old playfellows, and their cottages were scattered far and wide, for Plouherzel was not a village, but merely a district surrounding a chapel.

We had long rounds to make, along muddy paths between mossy slopes, overhung by ghostly old beech-trees, with the grey sky above.

All the cottages were alike, low, dark, and half buried ; their thatched roofs and rough granite walls covered with scurvy-grass, lichens, and the emerald moss of winter. They

looked dark and rude inside, with beds like cupboards, guarded by porcelain images of saints or holy virgins.

We met with a cordial reception everywhere, and were pressed to eat and drink. There were long conversations in Breton, into which they introduced a little French in honour of me. Yves' boyhood was the favourite topic. The old men and women laughed as they talked of the mischievous tricks he used to play, and I could see they had been very numerous.

“ Oh, what a naughty boy he was, sir ! ” while he calmly received these compliments and went on drinking.

There was a germ of the rover already, it seems, in the little Breton savage ; the boy Yves, who ran barefoot about these lanes at Plouherzel, was unconsciously father to the undaunted rollicking sailor of later years.

Towards evening, when the tide was out, Yves and I went down into the bed of the salt-water lake, into the basin of reddish brown sea-weed, each carrying a thickly buttered slice of black bread, and a big knife for picking whelks. He wanted us to enjoy one of the treats of his boyhood, raw shell-fish eaten with bread and butter.

The sea had retired to a great distance, leaving great wastes of wrack, and a vast tract covered with brown marine grass and curious living flowers. This immense moat was enclosed by granite walls, and the crouching stone animal which formed the island in the centre was laid completely bare, and showed its black pedestal. There were many other rocks too which had lain concealed at high water, but were now visible, and rose covered with long trails of seaweed like dishevelled locks. They might be seen dotted all over the sombre flat, like animals awaking in strange attitudes.

The cold air was full of the pungent smell of the seaweed. Night was stealthily creeping on, and the great blocks of

stone began to assume the aspect of as many monsters. We picked out the whelks with the point of our knives and ate them all alive, taking a bite at our bread and butter at the same time ; we were both eager to finish while there was yet light to see.

“ It is not so good as it used to be,” said Yves, when he had done, “ and this place makes me feel sad. I remember when I was a boy, I used to have just the same feeling at times, but not so strong as to-night. Shall we go now ? ”

I replied in astonishment : “ Why, my poor Yves, if you are not beginning to take after me ! ”

“ After you, do you say ? ”

And he regarded me with a long melancholy smile which conveyed much that was new, and could find no expression in words. That evening showed me that we had much more in common than I could ever have supposed ; his ideas and impressions bore a great likeness to my own.

“ And now,” he went on to say, as if following out the same line of thought, “ do you know what has always tormented me when we were far away on the ocean or in those distant lands ? I dare scarcely tell you—it was the idea that I might die and not be buried in our graveyard here.”

He pointed to the church spire at Plouherzel, which rose in the distance like a grey point above the granite rocks.

“ It was not on account of any religious feeling, of course, for you know I care very little about priests. But it is a sort of fancy that I have, I can’t give you the reason. And when it unluckily comes into my head, it takes all the spirit out of me.”

## XXII.

IT was that evening, after supper, that Yves' mother solemnly commended her son to my care, an obligation which has clung to me for the rest of my life.

Her maternal instinct led her to divine that I was not what I seemed, and might be able to exercise a powerful influence over the life of her youngest son.

The young girl acted as interpreter. "She says that you are deceiving us, sir, and that Yves is doing the same in order to oblige you; you are not really one of us. And she asks, whether, as you are on the same ship, you will keep an eye on him."

Then the old woman began to tell me the story of Yves' father, which I had heard long ago from Yves' own lips. I liked to listen to it though from those of the daughter, as she told it in front of this wide Breton hearth, while the flames danced on a beech log.

"She says that our father was a fine sailor, the handsomest man ever seen in that part of the country. He died, leaving thirteen of us. He died like many another sailor in these parts, sir. One Sunday, when he had been drinking, he went out in his sailing boat at night, though there was a high wind blowing from the north-west, and he was never seen again. He was like his sons, he had a good heart, but a bad head."

Here the poor mother looked at her son Yves.

"She says," continued the young girl, "that my parents lived at St Pol de Léon, in Finisterre, and that Yves was a year old, and I was not born when my father died. She left that town and came back to Plouherzel in Goëlo, which was her

native place. My father left his affairs in great confusion ; almost all the money we once had had been spent in the public-house, and my mother had no bread to give us. So then our two eldest brothers, Gildas and Goulven, went off as cabin-boys for a long voyage.

“They were not often seen here after they had once gone, and yet they were fond of us. They gave up their pay for a long time to help my mother to bring up us little ones, Yves, and the sister who is here, and myself.

“But Goulven deserted more than fifteen years ago, sir, in a fit of temper——”

“They were fine brave sailors, too,” said the old woman, “their hearts were true to the core,—but they had their father’s head, and they took to drinking——”

“My brother Gildas,” resumed the young girl, “went cruising on an American whaler for seven years in the Pacific. He made a great deal of money, but I believe it is a hard life, sir ?”

“It is indeed. I have seen these sailors, half fishermen, half pirates, and the life they lead, spending whole years in the heavy surges of the southern seas without touching any habitable land.”

“My brother Gildas was so rich when he came back from the fishing, he had a large bag filled with gold pieces.”

“He poured them out here into my lap,” said the old woman, raising her skirts as if she were holding them still, “and my apron was full of them. There were large gold coins from other countries, marked with all sorts of figures of men and birds.\* There were some that were quite new, stamped with the portraits of a lady crowned with feathers,†

\* Chili condors.

† Californian 20 piastre pieces, the favourite coin for the savings of a whaler’s crew.

each worth more than a hundred francs, sir. We had never seen so much gold in our lives. He gave a thousand francs to each of his sisters, and a thousand to me his mother, and bought me the little cottage in which we live. The rest he spent in amusing himself at Paimpol, and doing a good many things which he had better left undone. But they all do it, sir, as you know better than I. He was the talk of the town for two months——”

“Then he went off, and we have never seen him since. My brother Gildas was a brave sailor, sir; but drink ruined him, as it did his father.”

And the old woman bowed her head sadly as she spoke of that incurable evil which is the scourge of Breton sailors.

There was a silence, and then she spoke to her daughter again in a grave tone and looked at me.

“She asks, sir, whether you will make her this promise —about my brother——”

Her earnest anxious eyes were fixed on me, and sent a strange thrill through my veins. All mothers, wherever they may be, have the same expression at certain moments, and I felt now as if Yves' mother bore some resemblance to my own.

“Tell her that I swear to watch over him all my life, as if he were my brother.”

And the young girl repeated my words, translating them slowly into Breton: “He swears to watch over him all his life, as if he were his brother.”

The old mother had risen from her seat, still erect and harsh and gruff; she had taken a crucifix down from the wall, and was advancing towards me, as if resolved to take me at my word, with a primitive simplicity and pertinacity.

“She asks you to swear upon this, sir.”

“No, mother, no,” said Yves in his confusion, trying to interpose and stop her.

I felt a little surprised, nay, a little touched, as I stretched out my arms towards the crucifix and repeated :

“I swear to do what I have just promised.”

My arm trembled a little, however, because I foresaw the difficult obligations I was undertaking.

Then I took hold of Yves’ hand, as he stood there dreamily, hanging down his head : “And you will obey me and follow me, will you not, *my brother?*”

He hesitated and looked away, as he replied in a low voice, with a child-like smile :

“Yes, certainly.”

### XXIII.

*MY BROTHER* and I had not a long time to spend that night in our cupboard beds.

As soon as the old cottage cuckoo clock had sung out four in its cracked voice, we had to jump up at once : we were to be at Paimpol before daybreak, in order to take the diligence from Guingamp at six.

At half-past four that gloomy winter’s morning, the poor little door opened to let us out ; it closed again after a parting kiss to Yves from his weeping mother, and a parting squeeze of my hand. We left in the chilly rain and thick darkness, bidding them farewell for five years.

Such is the usual course of things in sailor families.

When we had gone half-way, we heard the distant sound of the Angelus ringing at Plouherzel. We thought we were late, and began to run as hard as we could ; our foreheads were streaming with perspiration by the time we reached Paimpol.

It was all a mistake ; the Angelus had been rung too soon.

We took refuge in a tavern that we found already open,

and breakfasted in company with some Icelanders and other seamen.

That same day, at 11 P.M., we were back at Brest, ready to go to sea.

I was conscious of having accepted a serious charge in adopting such an unruly brother, especially as I felt the full responsibility of my oath.

Within two days, however, fate intervened, and soon put half the globe between us. Yves sailed away across the waters of the Atlantic, while I went along the Levant, bound for Stamboul.

It was not till fifteen months afterwards, in May 1877, that we met again on board a vessel called the *Médée*, coasting in the Indian and Chinese seas.

## XXIV.

ON BOARD THE "MÉDÉE," April 1877.

"THESE suit me as well as gaiters would a rabbit," said Yves childishly, as he looked at his pagoda sleeves and robe of blue Burmese silk.

We were at Ye, a Siamese town, lying on the bay of Bengal. He was sitting inside a seamen's tavern, on a sort of Chinese stool.

He was quite tipsy, and after he had smiled at seeing himself dressed like a wealthy Asiatic, his eyes again looked dull and morose, and he pursed up his lips with an air of disdain. At moments like these, he was capable of anything, as in former days.

By his side sat the big Kerboul, also a mizzen-topman, who had just been ordering fifteen glasses of a very expensive Singapore brandy, and after emptying them in succession, had

smashed them with his fist, with the terrible gravity of a drunken Breton. The remains of these broken glasses strewed the table on which he had just placed both his feet.

Barrada, the gunner, was there too, quiet and handsome as ever with his cat-like smile. The sailors had made an exception in his favour, and invited him to join their party. Le Hello and Barazère were there too, and six mainmast and four bowsprit men,—all strutting about in Asiatic robes, and giving themselves great airs.

There was even Le Hir among them, a half-wit from the island of Sein, whom they had brought there for fun, and who was drinking diluted filth in his jorum of rum. Two sailors belonging to no vessel made up the party ; they were men who had deserted under every flag, old acquaintances of Yves, who had picked them up on the shore that evening and given them a hearty reception.

They were all gathered together in honour of Saint Epissoire, the sailors' patron saint, and custom obliged me, as their officer, to accompany them.

It was a year since they had been ashore, and their captain, who was satisfied with his crew, had given the best-conducted of them leave to celebrate this anniversary as if they had been in France. He had selected this town of Ye as being the least dangerous place for us, since its inhabitants were more inoffensive and tractable than those of most others.

The long low room with papered walls was also occupied by a troop of sailors from an American trading vessel ; these were drinking with some red-haired girls with big teeth, who had escaped from British India.

Our men were annoyed by the presence of these intruders. They wanted to have the room to themselves, and told them so.

11 P.M.—Fresh candles had just been lighted in the coloured candelabra, while the rest of the Siamese town was fast asleep that warm evening. Our atmosphere seemed charged with blows, these arms seemed to require exercise, and to be longing to strike out.

“What is this?” said one of the Yankees who had a Marseillais accent, “are these Frenchmen to come here and lay down the law? And who is this fellow with them (*myself*), the youngest of all, who gives himself such airs and wants to order them about?”

“That fellow,” said Yves, affecting not to deign even to turn his head, “is one on whom you had better not lay a finger, unless you wish to fight!”

“Who is that fellow?” said Barrada. “Wait, and we will soon show you, my lads, without putting him to the trouble of teaching you!”

Yves had already thrown his Chinese stool against the wall, just grazing their heads, while Barrada felled two of them with one blow from his fist. They fell one over the other, and Kerboul bumped the table on the heap of them, scattering the remains of his fifteen glasses on the enemy.

Then a sound of bells and gongs was heard outside, with a rustling of silk and shrill feminine laughter.

The dancing women entered: the sailors had sent for them.

The men stopped short as they entered, startled by the strange apparition. The women advanced into our midst with a fixed, meaningless smile on their faces; they were painted like Chinese images, covered with gold and glittering stones, their eyes were half closed, and looked like little white slits, and they held their arms in the air and stretched out their slender fingers, the long nails of which were enclosed in gilt sheaths.

Odours of balm and incense arose. They were burning some wands in a chafing-dish, and a languid smoke like a blue cloud was diffused around.

The gongs sounded still louder, and these phantoms began to dance, never moving their feet, while they executed a rhythmical movement by swaying the lower part of their bodies and turning their wrists. It was always the same fixed smile, the stony stare of a corpse; the only signs of life in them were the lascivious agitation of their thick hips swaying backwards, and the twisting of the restless outstretched hands at the extremity of these rigid arms.

Le Hello, who had been asleep on the floor for some time, was roused by the loud noise of the gongs, and took fright.

“Why, it is only the dancers!” explained the ironical Barrada, laughing at him.

“Ah, yes, the dancers!”

He rose and brandished his big hand about in the air, trying to beat down these outstretched arms and gilt claws, stammering in a thick, husky voice:

“Don’t do that, you figure on a screen; you must not show your hands like that, it is too horrid. If I did not think it was—it was—the devil!”

And down he sank again on the floor and fell asleep.

Barrada, who had exceeded his usual potations that night, reproached them for having yellow skins, and talked to them about his own white one. “So white! so white!” He kept on vaunting its whiteness, which was quite an exaggeration, and ended by wanting to show it them. First his head and then his chest; he kept saying, “Here, see if it is not true!”

The yellow Asiatic puppets never ceased their slow, dismal, mechanical movements, still maintaining the mystery of their

rigid attitude and showing the whites of their upturned eyes. And Barrada, completely stripped by this time, was dancing in front of them like a Greek statue suddenly come to life to take part in a Bacchanalian revel.

The Burmese, however, who seemed wound-up like automata, went on dancing and dancing after he had given in. And as the night wore on and the gongs ceased to sound, the sailors were seized with terror at the idea that these women had been paid for their pleasure, and were waiting for them. One by one they went off to the shore, not venturing to approach them.

## XXV.

THIS Barrada was Yves' great friend, and had extricated himself from other engagements in order to sail for the third time on the same ship with us.

He was an illegitimate child, who had grown up in the open air on the quays of Bordeaux. He had a great many vices, but a kind heart ; he was a combination of contradictory qualities, and quite devoid of some of the primary notions of self-respect. He prided himself on being handsomer, stronger, and nimbler than others, and cleverer in getting out of scrapes.

This Barrada was ready for a consideration to practise every kind of exercise popular amongst sailors—wrestling, sword-stick, boxing, besides gymnastics, singing, and dancing. He was as supple as a clown ; a friend of every Hercules at the fairs, ready to pose for the sculptors, willing to contend with acrobats for money.

He always took a prominent part in the seamen's festivities, but invariably as a guest ; drank a good deal, but never

at his own expense—a good deal, but not to excess, emerging from every Bacchanalian entertainment as erect, as smiling, and as fresh as ever.

He had always some amusing repartee ready, which no one else would ever have thought of, rendered still more piquant by his Gascon accent ; besides which, his phrases ended in a sound peculiar to himself, a sort of laugh which resounded from his deep chest like the hoarse noise made by a lion when he yawns.

Add to this that he was kind-hearted, grateful, obliging to everybody and staunch in his friendships ; always giving a straightforward answer, conveyed with the unembarrassed frankness of a child.

He turned everything to account, even his good looks when occasion served. It was all done in his untutored, good-humoured way, so that the others, knowing him, forgave him as more of a boy than themselves. Yves contented himself with saying, “Oh, Barrada, that will never do, I must tell you,” but never felt angry with him.

He was always making money and converting it into fine gold pieces, which he sewed into a leather belt and wore round his waist. He was saving it all up in order to enable him, when the five years for which he had re-engaged himself came to an end, to marry a little Spanish milliner from a grand shop in the Passage Sainte-Catherine at Bordeaux. She was a refined little creature, and he always carried her photograph about him, taken in profile, with a fringe on her forehead, in an elegant fur cap trimmed with a wing.

“ You see we were playfellows as children,” he would say, as if some excuse were requisite.

And while waiting for his little wife, he often took up with other women, sometimes from interested motives, and some-

times, like Yves, from mere good nature, lest he should offend them.

## XXVI.

*May 1877.*

A TREMENDOUS gale had been howling round us for two days. The sky was very black, and resembled that in Poussin's picture of the Flood, only that the clouds kept moving, driven onward by this formidable wind.

The great noise kept increasing ; it was deep-toned and incessant, like that of an exasperated fury. We kept encountering enormous volumes of water, rolled up into white-crested scrolls, which swept by as if they intended to recoil upon themselves : these broke upon our bows, with a terrible shock and hollow sound.

Sometimes the *Médée* seemed to rear her prow and ride over the waves, as if she too were possessed with fury. Then down she sank again head foremost, into the treacherous hollows which succeeded ; she touched the bottom of the trough which was seen suddenly opening between the raging walls of water, and we longed to ride the wave again and escape from these lucid green walls which seemed to curve in, ready to close upon us.

An icy rain was flying through the air like long white darts, lashing and cutting us like whips. We had been approaching the north as we sailed along the Chinese coast, and suddenly encountered this unexpected cold.

In the rigging above, the men were trying to furl the topsails, which had been already close-reefed ; it was hard enough now to carry the mainsail, and it was absolutely necessary for us to sail right in the wind's eye.

The topmen had already been two hours over this task,

blinded, lashed, and pelted by everything falling on them, showers of spray dashed up by the sea, and rain and hail hurled down on them from the sky, while their numbed and bleeding hands were trying to seize the stiff wet canvas inflated by the furious gale.

It had become impossible to hear or see anything.

The men would have had quite enough to do merely to provide against being blown away by catching firm hold of these shifting objects, all streaming with wet; but they had their work aloft to do as well, on these rattling yards, which gave sudden lurches, like the last flap of a great bird's wings in its death-agony.

Cries of anguish came from above, from the cluster of men suspended in the air. The shrieks of a man are hoarser and seem more terrible than those of a woman, because we are less accustomed to hear them; these were shrieks of agony, as a hand got caught or fingers hooked, and were stripped of their flesh or torn off bodily; and now and then some unfortunate man, less robust than the rest, became stiff with cold, and felt that he should lose his hold and become dizzy and drop. Then the others took pity on him and lashed him to the shrouds, trying to lower him down.

This had gone on for two hours, and the men were thoroughly exhausted, they could do no more.

Then they were called down, to be replaced by the port-watch, who had had more rest and were not so cold.

They came down with blenched faces, dripping wet; the icy water was streaming down their backs and chests, their hands were bleeding, their nails torn, and their teeth chattering. They had been drenched through for two days, and had scarcely taken any food or sleep, and it was telling on their strength.

These long periods of endurance and fatigue in the chilly

damp constitute the real horrors of the sea. Before the poor man utters his last cry, and the rattle is heard in his throat, he has been wet to the skin for days and nights together, covered with a thick incrustation of salt and cold sweat.

The roaring noise kept on increasing. At times it assumed the sound of a shrill piercing whistle, as if in a paroxysm of exasperation, and then it became deep and hollow, booming as though the elements were about to dissolve. We were still tossing from one wave to another, and everything was growing darker except the sea, which still retained its ill-omened whiteness, a mass of foam and spray. An icy twilight was closing round us ; it was the hour of sunset, and the light was vanishing behind the sombre curtains, the watery masses filling the sky, leaving us to do as best we could in the darkness.

Yves had gone up into the rigging with the port-men, and I was looking up, blinded by the rain myself, so that I could only catch an occasional glimpse of this group suspended in the air.

Suddenly there came a stronger gust and a greater rattling than ever, and the outline of the group seemed to change ; two forms became detached and fell with outstretched hands into the raging abyss beneath, while the other dropped down flat on the deck without a cry, like a man already dead.

“The stirrup gone again !” said the master of the watch, stamping with rage. “Some rotten stuff they gave us in that filthy port of Brest ! That big Kerboul is overboard. Who is the other man ?”

Some of the others who had caught hold of the ropes and swung in the air for a moment, were climbing up again now by means of their hands, as nimble as monkeys.

I recognised Yves as one of the climbers, then I drew a long breath after an agonising suspense.

Buoys were thrown out to the men overboard, but what was the use? It would be better not to see anything of them, for it would be impossible to heave-to and pick them up, lest we should be struck by the waves a-beam, so we should be forced to steel our hearts and abandon them to their fate. The names were called over, however, in order to learn whom we had lost: it was a good little fellow on his first voyage, whom his mother, an elderly widow, had come to put under the master's charge before we left France.

The other who had fallen on the deck crushed, was carried down, as well as could be managed, to the cockpit, and dropped again on the way thither; it had become a wretched filthy place, and lay two feet deep in black muddy water, strewn with broken phials, and redolent of all the medicines thus wasted. There was not even a peaceful spot for him to close his eyes in; the sea had no pity on the dying man, but tossed and bumped him about all the time. A sound issued from his throat, a sort of rattle, lost in the greater noises around. If there had been a few minutes' calm, it might have been possible to do something for him, and so prolong his sufferings. But he died almost immediately under the care of nurses stupified by fear, who tried to make him eat.

8 P.M.—At this hour the watch was changed, and it was my turn to take command of it, no easy task.

We kept our feet as well as we could. There was nothing to be seen. Such a roar prevailed that human voices were quite inaudible; the flute-like sounds of the silver whistles, like the piping of little birds, proved more penetrating.

The waves struck the sides of the ship like huge battering-rams. Watery abysses seemed yawning beneath us on all sides, and we were hurled, head foremost, into the darkness. Then some force seemed to rush upon us and toss us up

again into the air, and the *Medée* gave a bound and vibrated like an enormous drum.

Cling as we would, we felt ourselves tossed up, and then clung again all the harder, closing our eyes and mouths because, without seeing, we guessed instinctively that a volume of water was about to sweep through the air, and might sweep us away with it.

There was a constant succession of these descents, followed by frightful bounds and the drum-like noise.

Each of these shocks was followed by a stream of water pouring over everything, and the crash of numbers of things, while hundreds of fragments rolled about in the dark, prolonging the terror of the first loud noise.

And what were my poor Yves and his men doing aloft ? A glimpse of the shadowy masts and yards might be caught now and then, when the sharp sting of the driving hail allowed one to raise one's head ; the cross-trees were to be seen rocking wildly in the storm.

“ Order them down,” said the captain to me, preferring the danger of an unfurled topsail to the risk of losing more hands.

I was only too glad to give the order at once. But Yves replied through his whistle that it was all but finished, they had only to replace the bunt gasket, which had snapped, by an end of rope, and then they would all come down, having completed their task and furled the sail.

When they were all safe on deck again, I breathed more freely. There were no men up in the air now, and nothing to do but to wait. Now that I was relieved from my burden of anxiety, I almost enjoyed the storm, and fancied myself snug on the gangway.

## XXVII.

IT was midnight, my watch was ended, and we could go and seek shelter from the elements.

On the caulked gun-deck below, the miserable state of a storm-tossed vessel might be realized.

The whole length of this long sombre deck might be seen by the dim light of the swinging lanterns. The cannon, resting on their carriages, managed to retain their places, fastened by iron cables. The whole place was afloat ; everything jogged about as if it were being rattled up and down in a sieve ; there was a constant creaking, a shudder like that of a living creature in pain, teased and torn about till it is ready to expire.

The raging waters outside were trying to force an entrance, and a thread of water was trickling down in some places and spouting in at others.

Those within were half carried off their legs as the vessel bounded forward, and then everything seemed to sink from beneath their feet as she fell again, and they unconsciously stiffened their limbs into resistance.

Sharp, discordant, startling noises seemed to abound ; the *Médée* might have been parting asunder and groaning under the wrench. And outside these wooden walls, there was still the same hollow sound and awful roar.

Still, everything resisted. The long gun-deck remained intact ; it was still possible to look straight down it and see everything rolled to one side, but soon righting itself. It looked longer than ever in this darkness, which swallowed up the lanterns ; its dimensions became vaguer and larger, like a place seen in a dream, as this noise went on.

Interminable rows of canvas pockets, weighed down by some heavy body, swung from the low ceiling, looking something like spiders' webs hanging from the walls ; they were the sailors' hammocks, each of which contained a human being.

Here and there an arm or bare leg might be seen hanging out. Some of them lay fast asleep, quite worn out by all they had undergone, while others were tossing about and talking aloud in disturbed dreams. All these grey hammocks kept swinging and gently touching one another ; sometimes, too, they came into actual collision, and heads got bumped together.

On the floor, beneath these poor slumbering creatures, lay a pool of black water, rolling first to the right and then to the left. In this floated dirty clothes, pieces of bread or biscuit, soup that had been upset, fragments of every sort, and nauseous human filth. Now and then wan, haggard, half-naked figures, shivering in their wet shirts, came groping along these lines of grey hammocks in search of their own little swinging bed, the only tolerably dry warm spot to which they could retreat in hopes of finding some sort of rest. On they staggered, catching hold of anything that came in their way to save themselves from falling, and bumping their heads against the sleepers. At such times men think only of themselves. Their feet kept slipping in pools of water and dirt ; they were as reckless of decency as sick animals.

The atmosphere below was close and foul ; the filthy matter rolling about on the floor made the place look like a den of sick beasts, and gave rise to that nauseating smell peculiar to the holds of ships during bad days at sea.

Yves, too, went down to the gun-deck at midnight with the other port men ; they had extended their watch for an

hour in order to make fast the boats. They slid down the half-open hatchway, and it closed after them as they joined the miserable creatures below.

These men had been at work five hours, swinging in the air, exposed to the furious wind, and drenched by the driving rain which lashed their faces. They pulled a face of disgust as they entered the sickly atmosphere of this place.

Yves remarked, with his disdainful air :

“ You may be sure those land-lubbers have poisoned this place.”

They were regular salts themselves, and never ill ; their chest had been braced by the gale in the tops, and they would sleep soundly now after so much healthy fatigue and endurance. They stepped carefully along the rings and hooks and gun-carriages, clinging barefoot like cats to every projection, in order to avoid the bilge water and filth. On reaching their hammocks they undressed, hanging up their caps and their large knives with leather chains ; they hung up their dripping clothes, and then themselves ; and when they had stripped, they wiped off with their hands a little water that was still trickling down their strong chests.

Then they swung themselves up with the agility of a clown, and stretched themselves out in their narrow canvas hammocks, close to the white beams. There was a sound like the rush of a cataract overhead after each great shock ; it was the waves sweeping over the deck. But their hammocks went on swinging like the rest, creaking on their iron hooks, while their occupants slept sound in spite of the awful storm.

In a little while Yves saw the Burmese women dancing round his hammock. One by one they emerged from a cloud of incense, which looked denser than ever in his dream. On they came with their corpse-like smile, in strange silk

robes all covered with jewels. Their bodies vibrated voluptuously to the sound of the gong, while their hands were raised and the fingers outspread like phantoms. Their wrists writhed convulsively, and entangled the long claws sheathed in gold.

The gong was the storm beating on the sides of the vessel.

## XXVIII.

WHEN midnight arrived and my watch was over, and I had seen Yves go down, I went to my cabin to try to get a little sleep too. After all, we were neither of us responsible for the fate of the ship. We had given all the time and labour required of us, and might lie down to rest with the sailor's perfect unconcern when his hours of service are ended.

In my cabin, which was on deck, there was no lack of air. Every squall and driving shower was free to enter through the broken windows; the curtains were twisted round and blown up to the ceiling, they flapped like wings.

I, like Yves, hung up my wet clothes. The water was trickling down my chest.

I was not over-comfortable in my cot, but I was so tired that I soon fell asleep. I was rolled and tossed about from right to left, and nearly pitched on the floor, and my head was bumped against the wood-work. I was conscious of all this, and yet I was asleep and dreaming of Yves. An impression of anxiety had been left on my mind by seeing him fall that day, and I felt as if I had come into contact with something terrible.

I had dreamed that I was sleeping in a hammock, as I used to do during the first years I was at sea, and that Yves'

hammock was close to mine. We were pitched about terribly, and his gave way ; beneath us lay something black, swirling round—it must be deep water, and he was on the point of falling into it. I tried to seize him with my hands, but there was no strength left in them, they were powerless as usual in a dream. I tried to catch hold of him round the body, and clasp my arms round his chest, remembering how his mother had entrusted him to my care ; then I was agonised to find that I could not ; he was about to elude my grasp, and fall into the dark seething abyss beneath. And then I was frightened to find that he did not wake, he was frozen, and the cold seemed to pierce me to the very marrow ; even the canvas of his hammock had become stiff as a mummy-case.

I was suffering pain from the thuds and bumps I was really receiving, and mingling the real with the imaginary in my dream, as we do in a state of ultra fatigue, and so the sinister vision became more intense and vivid.

Presently I lost consciousness of everything, even the pitching and the noise, as I fell into a sounder sleep.

When I awoke, it was morning. The first rays of dawn had that yellow tinge peculiar to the sunrise on tempestuous days, and the roar outside had never ceased.

Yves had just opened my door, and was looking at me. He was crouching in the doorway, steadying himself by one hand, and swaying backwards and forwards according to the requirements of the moment to maintain his balance. He had donned his wretched wet clothes again, and was completely covered with brine, the salt lay on his hair and beard like powder.

He was smiling, and his face looked calm and gentle.

“ I wanted to see you,” said he ; “ I dreamed about you a good deal last night. I kept seeing those Burmese women

with the long gold nails, you remember them ? They were dancing round you with those horrid antics, and I could not manage to drive them away. Fortunately the call came, 'Hammocks down !' I was quite in a perspiration with my fright."

"And I am just as glad to see you, my poor Yves, for *I* have been dreaming a good deal about *you*. Is the weather just as bad as yesterday ?"

"A shade better, perhaps. We have daylight, at any rate, and then it is always easier to work in the rigging. But when it is pitch dark, like last night, there is no doing anything."

Yves cast a glance of satisfaction round my cabin, which he had arranged in preparation for stormy weather. Thanks to his good management, nothing had moved. A pool of salt water certainly, in which various objects were floating, lay on the floor ; but everything I cared about had remained suspended to the walls or fastened to the panels by nails and iron stanchions. Everything was tied up most carefully with twine or cord or tarred rope. Weapons and bronzes might be seen fastened up along with clothes in curious arrangements. Japanese masks with long streaming masses of human hair stared at us through a trellis of pitched twine ; they showed the same vacant smile and upturned eyes as those Burmese women with the golden nails, who had been trying to devour me in Yves' dream.

Suddenly the bright, joyous sound of a trumpet was heard summoning hands to swab decks. The shrill clarion notes sounded rather silvery amidst the roar of the tempest.

Landsmen might think it an extraordinary proceeding to swab decks when the waves were washing over the vessel, but it did not seem so to us. It is done daily under all circumstances, and is one of the first regulations of nautical life.

So Yves left me, saying, as if it were the most natural thing in the world :

“Oh, then, I must go and see after this cleaning.”

The trumpeter, however, had been over-zealous, sounding without orders at the customary hour, for the decks were left unwashed that morning.

We could feel that the storm was really abating ; the roll and pitch had become longer and more regular, more like a heavy swell. The sea was less turbulent, and we heard fewer of those great shocks which had been attended with such a deep, booming noise.

Day had really dawned on us, not brightly, it is true, but with a strange livid yellow, still it was day, and preferable to the gloom of night.

It was evident that our hour had not come, for in two days more we were riding on calm waters in the port of Hong-Kong.

## XXIX.

*September 1877.*

THE *Médée* has been homeward bound for some time.

All the winds and currents have been in her favour. She has been sailing on so swiftly for days and nights together, that we have lost all idea of locality and distance. We have seen the Straits of Malacca left vaguely behind as we sailed through ; we have steamed up the Red Sea under a dazzling sun ; then we have seen the point of Sicily, and finally the great crouching lion of Gibraltar. Now a look-out is being kept on the horizon, and the first land we descry will be part of Brittany.

I have joined the *Médée* towards the end of her cruise, and

this time Yves and I have only been sailing together for five months.

In the midst of the grey sweep before us white streaks are now visible ; then a tower with some tiny dark islands scattered around it, all very distant, and scarcely discernible in this overhanging gloom.

We can easily fancy ourselves far away in the remote part of Asia we have just left behind us, for the things and faces on board ship have not changed in the least. We are still surrounded by Chinese curiosities ; are still eating fresh fruits gathered in those countries, and we carry Chinese smells about with us.

Our floating house, however, has rapidly changed its surroundings ; this tower and these islands are the Black Rocks ; Brest is close at hand, and we shall reach it before night.

Certain memories always force themselves upon me when I set eyes again on this grand, imposing harbour of Brest, and the great men-of-war which we rarely see elsewhere. All my early impressions of naval matters are connected with Brittany, and besides, it is part of France.

There lies the *Borda*. As I look at her, there rises before my eyes the desk over which I bent for hours studying, and the blackboard on which I wrote in such feverish excitement before the examination the complicated formulas of mechanics and astronomy.

In those days Yves was a little fellow, whom any one would have supposed grave and sensible, a little Breton sailor boy with a sweet face, on board the *Bretagne*, the companion vessel to the *Borda*, which lay alongside of her. We were boys then—we are full-grown men now—old age will soon follow, and then—death.

## XXX.

SUNDAY, the grand day for getting tipsy in Brest.

10 P.M.—The night is calm, the moonbeams play on the tranquil sea ; the long songs of the sailors on board the *Médée* have come to an end, and all is silent.

Ever since nightfall my eyes have been turned towards the lights of the town. I am waiting anxiously for the long-boat commanded by Yves : it has gone ashore, and not returned yet.

Ah ! there comes the red light at last, two hours behind time.

It is clear over the sea to-night. Shouts may already be heard mingling with the splash of oars ; something unusual must be happening in that boat.

It is scarcely alongside, when three angry drunken petty officers rush on board and ask me to put Yves to death.

“Clap him in irons first, and then let him be tried and shot for striking his superior officers !”

Yves stands there still trembling from his recent struggle. These three men have beaten him, or at least tried to do so.

“They thought they could hurt me !” said he, contemptuously, and he vows that he never returned their blows, no, indeed, or he should have knocked them all down with the palm of his hand. He let them set on him and tear him ; they scratched his face and rent his clothes to rags, because he refused to allow them, in their tipsy condition, to steer the boat.

All the crew were tipsy too, it is Yves’ fault for allowing them to drink.

The three officers are still standing close to him, shouting,

threatening, and calling him names ; three old drunkards, whose furious stammering is grotesque, and who would be simply ludicrous did not implacable discipline stand behind them to impart a grave character to the scene.

Yves is standing erect, with clenched fists, his hair falling over his forehead, his shirt in tatters and his chest bare, his patience nearly exhausted by their language ; he is ready to strike, and casts a glance of mute appeal at me.

Oh ! what a hard thing military discipline is at times ! I am officer of the watch, and it would be contrary to all rule for me to interpose except by a few calm words, referring them all to the judgment of the master-at-arms.

It was against rules, too, for me to spring from the gangway and dart upon Yves, but I was only just in time !—I threw my arms round his, and thus arrested them at the fatal moment when they were about to strike out.

Then I looked at the others, who, seeing the tables turned, beat a retreat, like dogs cowed by their master.

Fortunately it is night, and there are no witnesses, only the crew of the long-boat, and they are tipsy. Besides, I can rely on them : they are good fellows, and would bring forward nothing against us if it came to a court-martial.

So I took Yves by the shoulders, and passing in front of his three enemies, who drew back to make way for us, I took him to my cabin, and double-locked the door on him. He was safe there for the present.

I was summoned to the captain's presence. The noise had awakened him, and I had to explain the case.

I did so, striving to extenuate my poor Yves' conduct as much as possible. I gave my explanations, and then, for several anxious moments, I pleaded. I felt as if I had never pleaded for any one before, as if it was not myself but some one else who was speaking. Yet all that I could say or do

availed nothing against the cold reasoning of this man, on whom the life entrusted to me depended.

I had succeeded by my conduct on deck in clearing him from the most serious charge of all, that of striking his superior officers ; still there was the question of abusing them, and refusing to obey orders. Yves was guilty of this, and his conduct was wrong and improper, it was too true.

Orders were issued to put him in irons at once, and to send the guard to escort him, because of the scandalous disturbance.

Poor Yves ! The fates seemed against him, for he had not behaved so very badly this time. And all this to happen now that he was improving and making such efforts not to drink, and to do what was right !

### XXXI.

WHEN I returned to my cabin to tell Yves that he was to be put in irons, I found him sitting on my berth with clenched fists and set teeth. His hot Breton head had got the better of him.

He stamped his foot and declared that he would not go, --it was too unjust ! Let them try to carry him by force, if they chose, he would fell the first who laid a finger on him.

This put me into an agony, for I felt that he would ruin himself. What could I do ? The guard were at the door, waiting to take him off, and I dared not open ; minutes and seconds were passing, and I was going beyond bounds.

Suddenly an inspiration came to me. I entreated him in the gentlest manner, for his mother's sake, reminding him of

my oath, and for the second time in my life I called him *brother*.

Yves shed tears. It was all over now : he was subdued and docile.

I dashed some water on his forehead, adjusted his shirt a little, and opened my door. All this had taken only three minutes.

The guard made their appearance. He rose and followed them, submissive as a child. He turned round to give me a smile, went and replied quietly to the captain's questions, and then repaired to the hold to be put in irons.

Towards midnight, when my painful watch came to an end, I went to bed, and sent Yves a blanket and my cloak. (It was a very cold night.) This was, alas, all I could do for him.

On the following morning, which was Monday, the captain sent for me at an early hour, and I went with a feeling of rancour at heart, and bitter words on my lips, which I should have launched at him at once to avenge myself for the entreaties he had spurned yesterday, but that I feared to make matters worse for Yves.

I had been mistaken, however ; he had understood and been touched by my words that evening.

" You may go and find your friend. Lecture him a little, but tell him I forgive him. The matter shall not go beyond the ship, but be settled by a simple punishment, eight days in irons, and that shall be all. At your request I shall inflict a similar punishment on the three petty officers, eight days' arrest. I am doing this for your sake, because you choose to consider him your brother, and for his own too, for, after all, he is the best man on board."

I left him with very different feelings ; my heart was full of gratitude and affection now.

## XXXII.

A CORNER of the hold of the *Médée* is in the greatest disorder and confusion. The rays of a lantern fall on a vast pile of heterogeneous objects more or less gnawed by rats.

A dozen sailors—Barrada, Guiaberry, Barazère, Le Hello, a whole knot of friends—are clustered round a man lying on the ground. This is Yves in irons, stretched on the damp planks, with his head resting on his elbow, and his foot fast in the padlocked ring.

His most determined enemy, Lagatut, the master-gunner, one of the three, is standing before him, threatening him in the husky tones of an old drunkard with the revenge he means to take for this affair in the long-boat, my interference in which has not pleased him.

He has left his place of arrest to come and abuse him ; and I, who am officer of the watch and making my rounds, happen to come behind and find him there. The sailors see me coming, and know he will be caught, so they laugh in their sleeves. Yves makes no rejoinder, but merely rolls over and turns his back on him with the utmost coolness ; he, too, has seen me coming.

“A game of écarte has begun between you, Kermadec, captain of the mizzentop, and me, Lagatut, first master-gunner, decorated with the Legion of Honour,” he is saying. “Thanks to the officers who protect you, you have scored the first two tricks ; we will see who wins the rest.”

“We will make it a three-handed game, if you please, Lagatut,” said I, coming behind him. “It will be more lively, and you may now score another trick, Yves.”

A fowl falling on a knife, a thief running up against a policeman, or a mouse chancing to set its foot on a cat, could scarcely have looked more scared than Lagatut.

Perhaps my jest was not strictly official; the "gods," however, displayed much sympathy, and relished Yves' triumph.

Another week, and we were all on shore: our frigate was lying disarmed within the arsenal, like a dead vessel, and her crew disbanded.

I was going, and Yves had come to see me off by the train. The station was swarming with sailors: all those from the *Médée* were leaving, and others from the vessels in harbour had come with them.

There were many old acquaintances of ours among them, protégés and friends of Yves. All these good fellows were rather in liquor, and took off their caps, waving enthusiastic farewells. There were the usual scenes that take place when a crew is paid off: there is an explosion of grateful or rancorous feeling, hatred and sympathy are both openly shown.

As I clasped Yves' hand at the door of the waiting-room, I said: "You will be sure to write?"

He replied: "I want to explain;" and still he hesitated with a sweet, half-timid, smile. "Well, I must explain,—I don't know how to address you."

Such titles as captain, dear captain, &c., would certainly no longer meet our case. What was it to be? I made answer:

"Oh, it is perfectly simple —" (and I racked my brains fruitlessly for what was so simple). "It is quite simple, you have only to put—*Dear brother*, which will be quite true, and a correct commencement to your letter."

## XXXIII.

ABOUT six weeks had elapsed since the *Médée* had been disarmed at Brest, and Yves and I had parted, when one day the following letter surprised me, if my memory serves, at Athens :

BREST, September 15th, 1877.

“ My DEAR BROTHER,—I send these few hurried lines to let you know I was married yesterday. I ought, by good rights, to have consulted you first, but you see I had no time to lose, since I am sailing on the *Cornélie*, and have only a week to spend with my wife.

“ I think you will agree with me, dear brother, that this is better than always roaming about, you know. My wife’s name is Marie Keremenen. I may say that I am very fond of her, and I think we should get on capitally if I could only stay on shore.

“ I will write to you at greater length, dear brother, before I sail, and I assure you I feel very down-hearted at the idea of going without you this time.—I remain, with much love, your affectionate brother,

“ YVES KERMADEC.”

“ P.S.—I have just learned that my destination is changed. I am to embark on the *Ariane*, which does not sail till the middle of November. This gives me nearly two months to spend with my wife; we shall have plenty of time to make acquaintance, and you may think how pleased I am.”

Sailors always fling their money right and left when they come home from a voyage. Seaport towns know some of their wild freaks.

Occasionally, too, they marry by way of pastime, just to have an opportunity for wearing a black coat.

And now Yves, who had already exhausted every other sort of folly, had taken it into his head to marry—whom? Possibly some brazen-faced creature on whom he had chanced in a tipsy moment.

I had some cause for anxiety, for I remembered a certain woman in a plumed hat whom he had nearly married, just for fun, when he was but twenty, in this same city of Brest.

Two months later, when the *Ariane* was just on the point of sailing, I chanced to be nominated, at the last moment, to fill an appointment on this vessel.

Just as we were leaving I caught a glimpse of this Marie Keremenen, whom I had been so afraid of seeing. She was a young woman of about twenty, dressed in the costume of Toulven, a village in Lower Brittany.

Her fine black eyes had a frank and lively expression. Though not absolutely pretty, she looked almost charming in her embroidered stuff bodice, the white cap with long wings, and the wide collar, reminding one of a Medicis ruff.

There was an air of candour and modesty about her which was very attractive, and I thought she seemed the very wife I should have chosen for my brother Yves.

The pair had happened to meet one day when she came to Brest to see her godmother.

The wooer had been prompt, and she, captivated by Yves' appearance and sweet frank smile, had allowed him to talk her over to this hasty marriage, which would leave her widowed for seven or eight months of her early wedded life.

She had a little money of her own, and was to go back to her father's house at Toulven as soon as we had sailed.

Yves confided to me that a baby was expected.

"I would bet anything that he will arrive just as we return," said he ; "you will see !"

He clasped his weeping wife to his breast. Then the vessel heaved anchor, and we two sailed again for the azure regions of bonitos and iridescent fish.

#### XXXIV.

*November 15th, 1877.*

THE night before we sailed, Yves had made interest to obtain leave to go ashore in the day time in order to visit the Seamen's Hospital, and see his big brother Gildas, the whale-fisher, who had just arrived quite broken down.

They had not met for ten years. Gildas Kermadec was a tall man of forty, with more regular features than his brother. A trace of fire still lingered in his large eyes. He must have been very handsome.

Now he was paralysed and dying, worn out by brandy and excesses of every sort. His life had been consumed by pleasure, and his strength squandered on the world's highway.

He advanced slowly, leaning on a stick, still erect, but dragging one leg, and his eyes were turned.

"Oh, Yves !" he repeated three times, "oh, Yves ! oh, Yves !"

He could scarcely articulate, his speech was paralysed. He held out both arms to Yves, and the tears trickled down his bronzed cheeks.

Yves wept too. He could not stay long, for he had only leave of absence for an hour.

Gildas did not speak again ; he made Yves sit down by his side on one of the hospital benches, and held his hand, while he gazed on him with his wild, death-like eyes. He

tried at first to say many things which seemed to be troubling his confused brain ; nothing, however, fell from his lips but hoarse, inarticulate sounds, distressing to hear. It was all he could do, so he contented himself with holding his brother's hand, and looking at him with indescribable sadness.

This parting interview with his brother Gildas impressed Yves deeply. They had only met twice since Gildas went to sea, but still they were brothers : they belonged to the same cottage, and the mysterious bond of blood outlasts everything else.

A month later, when we put in for the first time, tidings reached us of Gildas' death. Then Yves put a band of crape round his woollen cuff.

### XXXV.

#### ON BOARD THE " ARIANE," *May 1878.*

THE isle of Teneriffe rose before us like a kind of vast pyramid resting on a mirror of sea. The marvellous clearness of the atmosphere brought its jagged coasts and gigantic mountain ridges nearer to us, and seemed to lessen their size. We could distinguish everything : the sharp angles were pinkish, while the hollows had a tinge of blue. It all rested on the sea like an aerial outline. A straight band of iridescent pearly-grey cloud lay across the island, and above this rose the sun-girt cone of the lofty Peak.

The sea-gulls were making an extraordinary disturbance around us, shrieking and flapping the air with their white wings in one of those fits of frenzy for which no one can account.

*Noon.*—The sailors have just finished dinner. “Starboard men, clear away plates!” has been piped. Then Yves, who belongs to the starboard watch on board the *Ariane*, comes on deck again and advances towards me, softly trying his whistle, to make sure it is in order.

“What can be the matter with these gulls to-day? They have done nothing but screech, screech, all dinner-time; have you heard them?”

Well, I could not really say what the gulls were about. Still, since I felt bound out of politeness to make some reply to Yves’ question, I answered somewhat to this effect:

“They were asking to speak to the officer of the watch, and that was myself. They wanted to hear something about their little cousin, Pierre Kermadec, so I said: ‘My godson, little Pierre Kermadec, has not arrived yet. You have come too soon; call again in a few days, when we reach Brest.’ And off they went; look at them all flying away!”

“You gave them the right answer,” rejoined Yves, who rarely laughed. “But I must tell you I dreamed a good deal about that only last night, and what do you think I am afraid of now? It might be a girl.”

Well, it *would* be a disappointment if my expected godson should prove a little girl! We could not call it Pierre then.

The relationship of Yves’ child to the sea-gulls was no invention of my own; *sea-gull* was the nickname always given to the topmen on board the *Ariane*. So it would not be surprising if my future godson had a little of the gull in his veins, and when we alluded to him in our conversations at night we always said, “When *the little gull* has arrived.”

## XXXVI.

BREST, June 15th, 1878.

WE are occupying temporary quarters in the Rue de Siam, Brest, where the *Ariane* has come to anchor this morning.

In reply to an announcement of his arrival, Yves has received the following telegram from old Keremenen at Toulven: "Little boy born this morning. He and Marie both doing well.—CORENTIN KEREMENEN."

Night has come, and we have gone to bed, but cannot sleep. I hear Yves tossing about; the idea of going to Toulven next day to see this baby makes his heart overflow with feelings he has never before experienced.

I am to come down to Toulven too, in a couple of days, to be present at the christening. He is full of endless plans about this ceremony:

"I dare hardly ask you, but if you would condescend to dine with us at Toulven. Of course, you know, at my father-in-law's house we cannot have everything as they have in town."

June 16th, 1878.

I set out early this morning for Toulven, where Yves has already preceded me.

The weather is splendid. This old Brittany looks green and covered with flowers. The whole of the way was skirted by thick woods and rocks.

Yves is waiting to meet the diligence by which I have travelled on from Bannalec. By his side stands a young girl of eighteen or twenty, blushing and looking very pretty in her large cap.

"This is Anne, my sister-in-law, who is to be the godmother," says Yves.

We have a little way to walk from the small town to their cottage, which is at Trémeulé in Toulven.

Some of the village lads take my luggage on their shoulders, and off I start, to visit the little stranger, and to make acquaintance with this family in Lower Brittany, upon whom my poor Yves has intruded so rashly.

What shall I think of my brother's new relations, and of this country which he is going to adopt as his own ?

We three walked on along deep hollow lanes, clad with ferns and overhung by beeches.

It was evening, the sky was overcast, and the lanes looked gloomy and smelt of honeysuckles.

Here and there we passed an ancient grey moss-grown cottage.

From one of these comes a cradle-song, sung in measured cadence by the voice of an old woman :

*Boudoul, boudoul, galaichen.  
Boudoul, boudoul, galaich du !—*

Meaningless words, probably invented by the old woman who first sang them.

“They are singing *him* to sleep,” said Yves, smiling. “Here we are.”

The Keremenens' cottage was half sunk in the ground and covered with moss : it was overhung by a green vault of oak and beech boughs, and looked as old as the soil itself.

The inside was dark, but the cupboard beds were visible, extending in a line with the oak chests along the rough granite walls.

A grandmother in a large white collarette was singing the baby to sleep with an old lullaby she had known as a child.

Here, in a Breton cradle of old-fashioned shape which had rocked his forefathers before him, lay *the little gull* ; a bonny fat baby of three days, looking as brown as a sailor already,

and sleeping with his fists clenched under his chin. A few tiny hairs, like those of a mouse, might be seen peeping from under his cap. I kissed him most affectionately, because he was Yves' son.

"Poor little gull," said I, softly touching his tiny hairs, "he has not many feathers yet."

"Quite true," said Yves, laughing. "And look here," added he, carefully unlocking the tiny hand he held in his own rough one; "he is not quite complete, for his fingers are not webbed."

We heard that Marie Kermadec was in one of the beds, and that its little perforated wooden door was closed, because she had just gone to sleep: so we lowered our voices lest we should awake her, and then Yves and I went off to the village to make arrangements for the morrow.

We were amused to find ourselves discharging civic duties like landsmen. When we went to call on the mayor and the curé, we felt as if we were acting a part, and were half inclined to laugh.

The *little gull* was entered on the Toulven registers as Yves-Pierre, receiving his father's Christian name and mine, according to the custom of the country. Then we agreed with the curé that he should meet us at the church at nine o'clock the following morning, and that there should be a Te Deum.

"And now let us go home," said Yves; "*father* must be back by this time, and they will be waiting supper for us."

The sweet June night was calmly and silently descending over the Breton landscape, and it seemed dark already in the deep lane.

Old Corentin Keremenen had returned from his work in the fields, and was standing at the door to welcome us. He had found time to change his clothes, and was wearing his

large hat with the silver buckle, and his holiday jacket of blue cloth, ornamented with metal spangles and an embroidery on the back, representing the Blessed Sacrament.

All the cottage seemed astir in honour of the occasion. Brass candlesticks, with lighted candles, stood on the table, which was covered with a damask cloth. The chests, stools, and old oak wainscoting shone like mirrors ; it was easy to see that Yves had been at work.

These candles did not throw out much light, and there were dark corners in the cottage. Large white things might be seen flitting about, these were the women's broad-winged caps and plaited collars ; otherwise the background was in darkness ; the flickering light died away on the granite walls and black uneven beams which supported the thatched roof. This thatch and the unpolished granite in Breton villages seem a relic of a primitive epoch.

The good soup that was steaming was presently set on the table, and we seated ourselves round it, Yves on my left, and Anne on my right.

We had quite a feast, several fowls with different sauces, buckwheat pancakes, sweet and savoury omelets ; wine and golden cider that sparkled in our glasses.

Yves said to me aside, in a low voice :

“ My father-in-law is an excellent man, and as to Marianne, my mother-in-law, you have no idea what she is ! I am very fond of them both.”

In the course of the evening a young girl brought some very stiff, newly starched things, from the village. Anne hastened to stow them all away in one of the chests, while Yves gave me a glance of intelligence, as much as to say :—“ You see what preparations they are making in honour of you ! ”

I had guessed what it was, the Sunday cap and enormous

collar, with countless plaits, in which she intended to appear at the ceremony.

I had a few little packets, too, which I should have been glad to unpack secretly, assisted by Yves, sugar plums and comfits, and a gold cross for the godmother. But Anne had caught sight of them all out of the corner of her eye, and began to laugh. It was a pity, but it is impossible to keep things secret in a cottage where there is only one door and one common room.

Little Pierre, with limbs as round as a baby modelled in bronze, still slept on in the same posture, with his tiny fists doubled up under his chin ; never was there a bonnier or better baby seen.

When I rose to take leave of them all, Yves proposed to walk with me to the village, where I was to get a bed at the inn.

It was perfectly dark in the hollow lane outside, under the spreading boughs ; the obscurity of night was deepened by the thick shade.

We are unaccustomed to the silence of the woods. Besides, we miss the sea ; this Toulven district lies far inland. We listen and fancy we ought to hear its familiar murmur in the distance, but everything remains silent. There is only the faintest flutter in the thick foliage above, tiny wings flapping, and birds stirring in their dreams.

There is still a scent of honeysuckle, but with the night comes a feeling of freshness and a smell of moss, soil, and Breton damp.

We feel oppressed by the silence that surrounds us in these sleeping fields, the wooded hills, and motionless trees. We feel ourselves strangers here, and we miss the grand open sea, on the boundless expanse of which we are accustomed to move.

Yves has impressions of this sort, and expresses them in an unsophisticated manner of his own, which might be scarcely intelligible to any one but myself. In the midst of his happiness, he feels a touch of anxiety, a half regret at having so rashly linked his destiny to this remote cottage.

And then we come to a Calvary, stretching out two long grey arms into the darkness, and we think of all the ancient granite chapels scattered around us, standing here and there among the beech woods, round which the spirits of the departed still hover.

### XXXVII.

ON the morrow, Thursday, June 16th, 1878, the christening procession was formed in the Keremenens' cottage in brilliant sunshine.

Anne had turned her back upon us and gone into a corner to arrange her big cap before the glass, half bashful at having to do it in my presence ; but Breton cottages are not large, and have no partitions beyond their little sleeping cupboards.

Anne's dress was of black cloth, and the open bodice was embroidered in many coloured silks and silver spangles ; her apron was of blue watered silk, and on her shoulders she wore a white collarette with endless plaits, which stood up as stiff as a sixteenth century ruff. I had donned a new uniform covered with gold lace, and so we promised to make a good show by-and-by, as we walked arm in arm along the green lane.

There was another figure by the baby's side that morning, an ugly old hag who ordered them all about ; this appeared to be the midwife.

"She does look rather like a witch," said Aune, guessing my thoughts ; "but she is a very good woman."

"Yes, that she is," asseverated old Corentin ; "it is only her appearance that is against her, sir. She is very pious, and even obtained great blessings last year, during the pilgrimage to St Anne."

She was bent double, had a nose like an owl's beak, and tiny grey eyes bordered with red, which blinked like a hen's, yet she flitted about here, there, and everywhere, with her large stiff holiday collar ; her voice had a truly sepulchral croak, so that it was quite startling to hear her speak.

Neither Yves nor I liked at first to see this old woman bending over the baby ; but then we remembered that for the last fifty years she had presided over the birth of every baby round Toulven, without ever having brought it harm, but rather good. Besides, she conscientiously observed all the ancient customs, such as giving the child, before the christening, some wine to drink, in which his mother's wedding-ring had been steeped, and other rites which ought never to be neglected.

We saw just as much as was desirable in this overshadowed cottage, sunk so much below the level of the ground. A little light came through the doorway, and at the further end there was a small window cut through the thick granite wall, but the ferns had grown over it, and their delicate sprays were visible through the glass like a green curtain.

At length little Pierre was completely dressed, without having cried once. I should have liked to have seen him in Breton costume, instead of which he was all in white, with a long embroidered robe and bows of ribbon, just like a smart town baby. This doll's costume made him look still healthier and browner ; the puny town-bred infants we see taken to be christened in this guise rarely come of such vigorous stock.

I was forced, however, to recognise that he was not pretty yet ; he might be by-and-by, but at present his little puffed cheeks reminded me of a kitten's.

Outside, in the ferny lane under the green canopy, some large white caps and embroidered bodices like Anne's were to be seen moving. Some young girls had come from the neighbouring cottages to see us pass.

Anne and I started arm in arm, little Pierre leading the way in the arms of the hook-nosed old woman, who ambled along with short steps at a good pace, limping like an old fairy. Yves' tall figure brought up the rear ; he wore his wedding clothes, and looked very grave, rather surprised at finding himself in such a procession, and shy at having to walk all alone, but such is the custom.

We walked gaily along the Breton lane that fine June morning ; little circles of light flittered through the oak and beech canopy over our heads, darting through the foliage like a shower. Wreaths of clematis and honeysuckle hung by the roadside, and every bird warbled a welcome to the *little gull*, who was making his first appearance in the sunshine.

At length we reached Toulven, which was almost a town. The good folk stood at their doors as we passed along the main street on our way to the church.

This was an ancient grey stone building, rearing into the blue sky a lofty pierced granite spire, gilded here and there by lichens. It overlooked a large tranquil pond covered with water-lilies, and a range of wooded hills which closed the horizon on that side without betraying their age.

An ancient graveyard surrounded the church, and the path leading up to the porch was bordered by crosses, springing out of a carpet of flowers—stocks, pinks, and tall white daisies. Even in deserted nooks where time had levelled the turf mounds, flowers grew over the dead : the ground

was pink with the wild catchflies and foxgloves of Brittany. The tombs seemed to press forward to the gates of this ancient church as if they were the mysterious threshold of eternity ; the massive grey pile and spire which rose towards the sky seemed some slight protection against annihilation—an appeal to heaven, an eternal prayer embodied in granite. And so these poor grass-grown graves await in fuller confidence, on the skirts of this church, the sound of the last trump and the voices spoken of in Revelations.

And when I am dead or broken down by age, my brother Yves will be laid to rest here ; his incredulous head will return to his mother earth, as well as the body she gave him. And one day little Pierre will sleep here too, unless the ocean claims him first ; and these wild Breton flowers, the foxgloves and tall June grass, will spring on their graves, just as we see them now under the warm summer sunshine.

All the children of the village were standing in the church porch, looking very grave, and the parish priest was there too in his vestments.

The porch was built in a very simple style of architecture, and its stones had been worn by many successive generations of Bretons ; some misshapen saints, carved in granite, rose before us like a row of gnomes.

We went through a long ceremony at the church door. The hook-nosed old woman had laid little Pierre in our arms, the godmother holding the feet and I the head, according to the usual custom. Yves gazed on us dreamily, as he leaned against the granite pillars, and Anne looked very pretty in her picturesque dress and high ruff, as the sunlight fell on her under the grey porch.

Little Pierre pulled a wry face, and passed the tip of his tiny tongue along his lip with a dissatisfied air when he received the salt, emblematic of the bitters of life.

The curé recited some long prayers in Latin, and then addressed the infant in the same language: *Ingredere, Petre, in domum Domini.* And then we entered the church.

Some saints in sixteenth century costumes stood there in niches, and watched little Pierre entering, with the same placid and mystic air that had seen ten generations come and go.

There was another long service at the font, and then Anne and I had to kneel together before the choir gate, like a newly-wedded pair.

Finally, I had to take Yves' son in my arms, though I was very much afraid of injuring him, mount the altar-steps with my precious little burden, and make him kiss the white cloth on which the Blessed Sacrament lay. I felt terribly awkward in my uniform, and must have looked as if I were carrying something really heavy. I never knew before what a difficult thing it was to carry a baby. Fortunately he was asleep; if he had stirred, I don't see how I could ever have managed it.

All the children in the village watched us depart; these little Breton boys had shy faces, round cheeks, and long hair.

The bells pealed out joyously from the ancient grey spire, and a Te Deum followed us, chanted by the fresh voices of little choristers in red cassocks and white surplices.

We were allowed to pass quietly and gravely down the flowery path, bordered by gravestones; but when we got outside, matters altered indeed!

Little Pierre, the cause of all this hubbub, had gone on first, still sleeping, while the hook-nosed old woman bore him away with quicker and quicker steps. Anne and I were fairly stormed; the little boys and girls shouted and danced round us, some of the latter were but five years old, and yet they wore big collars and cuffs like their mothers, and they sprang about like the drollest little dolls.

It was strange to see the delight of these rosy-cheeked,

yellow-haired children ; new to life, yet exhibiting the costumes and manners of former days ; bubbling over with unreasoning merriment, just like their ancestors who were gone ! They were enjoying their young life, just as kids and kittens do, yet in ten years these will have passed away ; puppies and lambs frisk and gambol too, and they grow up and are killed !

We threw them handfuls of comfits, and the whole of the way was strewn with sweetmeats. The *little gull's* christening will long be remembered in Toulven.

We came in time to our quiet Breton lane, and the wild hamlet lying at the end of its verdant shades.

It was close upon noon by this time, and butterflies and gnats fluttered all about the road. The day was a very hot one for Brittany.

The Keremenens' thatched roof was a perfect garden by daylight ; quantities of small pink, white, and yellow flowers had sprung up on it, besides a great variety of ferns, and the sun was gleaming overhead through the oak boughs.

It was still cool inside, in the dim green light, under the low black roof formed by the ancient rafters.

Dinner was ready on the table, and Yves' wife was up for the first time, and seated in her place in holiday costume to receive us. She seemed to have lost her youth during the last few days, and looked pale and thin. Yves gazed at her with a disappointment she could not help perceiving, but, as he felt this was unkind, he went and gave her an affectionate, though half-condescending kiss. I augured ill from seeing this disenchantment.

The christening dinner was a merry one, however. It consisted of a great number of Breton dishes, and occupied some time.

While we were at dessert, two voices were heard outside,

mumbling a sort of litany very rapidly in the language of Lower Brittany.

Two poor old women were standing there, arm in arm, leaning on sticks, like fairies when they assume mortal form in order to pass unrecognised.

They asked leave to enter, saying that they had come to wish little Pierre good luck. They prophesied many pleasant things over the oak cradle in which he was gently rocking, and then withdrew, invoking blessings on us all.

They received a handsome gratuity, and Anne cut them some bread and butter.

### XXXVIII.

A FINE scene arose in the course of the afternoon. My poor Yves became tipsy, and wanted to go off to Bannalec and take the train, in order to return to his vessel.

Anne had accompanied him and myself for a long walk through a wood, when he became suddenly possessed with this fancy. He turned his back upon us and walked off, saying that he did not mean to go back, and we followed him in much anxiety to see what he would do.

When we reached the Keremenens' cottage, there we found him, with his nice white shirt and good wedding suit thrown on the floor. He was stripped to the waist, as he would have been on board ship for his early morning's work, while he hunted for his jersey, which had been hidden out of the way.

“Lord, have mercy on us!” ejaculated his wife, as she clasped her poor white hands. “What can have happened, for he has not been drinking! Oh, sir, pray keep him from going,” said she in an imploring tone. “Whatever would

they say in Toulven when they saw him pass, and knew he was going to leave me!"

Yves had certainly taken very little to drink ; his head must have been half turned with the excitement of his happiness over dinner, and then we had taken him out for a walk in the blazing sunshine. It was not altogether his own fault.

Sometimes, though rarely, it was possible to influence him by the greatest gentleness. I was aware of this, but did not feel capable of resorting to this to-day. It was really beyond everything to be making such scenes as these in such a peaceful spot, and on our day of rejoicing !

I merely said, "Yves shall not go!" and I stationed myself in the doorway to intercept him, resting my shoulders against the old oak posts, which were substantial and massive.

He did not venture to make any rejoinder, nor to raise his restless sombre eyes to my face. He kept pacing to and fro, like a wild beast kept in captivity, still hunting for his seaman's clothes. He had said under his breath that nothing should detain him when he had once found the cap to put on his head, yet the idea of having to touch me if he tried to go out, kept him in check.

I was not in the best of humours myself, and felt nothing at the moment of that affection which had lasted so many years, and forgiven so much. I saw nothing before me but the tipsy, ungrateful, rebellious sailor.

There is a touch of the savage at the bottom of every man, especially when he has tossed about on the ocean. The worst part of our respective natures had got the upper hand now, and were coming into collision, as they had done in evil days gone by.

And outside, the same calm still reigned, the shade of the oaks, and the dim green light.

Poor old Keremenen could do nothing, and the affair seemed likely to take a distressing and odious turn, when Marie was suddenly heard sobbing ; she was shedding the first tears of her married life, bitter, scalding drops, which foretold many more to follow, and the sobs sounded pitiful as they broke on our painful silence.

They conquered Yves, and he crept towards her to give her a kiss. "Come, I was wrong," said he, "and I ask your forgiveness."

Then he turned towards me and addressed me by a title which he had often written, but never ventured to use when speaking : "You must forgive me too, *brother!*" and he kissed me also.

Then he apologised to the aged couple, who gave him hearty parental kisses, and to his son, the *little gull*, by pressing his lips to the tiny clenched fists which hung out of the cradle.

He had come to himself, and was all right again now ; he was the real Yves, my brother. There was something simple and childlike, as usual, in his penitence, which made us all freely forgive and forget his fault.

He began to pick up the things he had thrown on the floor, shook off the dust, and put them on again without a word ; he looked sad and exhausted as he wiped his forehead, on which the cold perspiration stood in beads.

An hour afterwards, I stood looking at Yves, whose athletic form was bending over his child's cradle ; he had just rocked the baby to sleep, and was now carefully slackening the impetus of the cradle in order to bring it gradually to a standstill. Presently he leaned over to have a closer view of the infant, examining it with the greatest curiosity, as if he had never seen it before, and touching the little clenched fists and the tiny mouse-like hairs which still escaped from under its little white cap.

His face assumed an expression of extreme tenderness as he stood thus in contemplation ; then a hope dawned upon me that this little child might possibly one day prove his safeguard and talisman.

In the evening, after supper, Anne, and Yves, and I went out for a walk, which proved much quieter than the previous one.

Nine o'clock found us seated on the edge of a wide path leading through the woods. It was not yet dark, for the fine June evenings are very long in Brittany ; still we began to talk of ghosts and apparitions.

Anne said : " In winter, when the wolves come, we can hear them from our house, but sometimes ghosts make just the same howl, sir."

The only sound we heard that evening was the gentle hum of the cock-chafers and beetles as they circled in the warm air. And then a distant Tuwhoo ! Tuwhoo ! came from the woods, the gentle mournful note of an owl.

Yves said to me ; " Do you hear the French parrots singing, brother ? " This was an allusion to his so-called parrot on board the *Sybille*.

The delicate long grasses, with their grey dusty flowers, formed a couch on the ground, into which we sank ; and the last moths, having ended their flight, vanished one by one into the thick undergrowth, to sleep clinging to their stems.

Twilight was slowly and calmly closing round us, investing everything with an air of mystery.

A young lad passed with a wallet on his shoulder and a peacock's feather in his hat ; he was returning home tipsy from the *Pardon* at Lannildu. (I cannot say that this has any connection with my story of Yves ; I merely set down what has chanced to remain impressed on my memory.) The

boy stopped to harangue us, and then, by way of peroration, pointed to his wallet : "Look there," said he, "I have two cats inside." (Not that this had anything to do with what he had just been telling us.)

He laid his bundle on the ground, and dashed his large hat down on it. Then a noise of *swearing*, like the savage voices of big tom-cats, came from the wallet, and it began to whirl round and round on the path.

After having convinced us they were cats, he replaced the bundle on his shoulder, took leave of us, and went his way.

### XXXIX.

*June 17th, 1878.*

We were up early, in order to go and pick bilberries in the woods. Anne was no longer arrayed in her handsome holiday costume ; she wore a plain collar and a simpler cap. Her blue woollen dress was embroidered in yellow ; down either side of her bodice ran patterns imitating the rows of eyes on a butterfly's wings.

In the green shades of the hollow lanes we met women going to early mass at Toulven. Their wide collars might be seen advancing along these green vaults, with the high white caps, the lappets of which drooped symmetrically over their ears like an Egyptian head-dress. Their waists were tightly laced in double bodices of blue cloth, not unlike the thorax of an insect, and on these the same variety of colours was always embroidered and the same lines of butterflies' eyes. They bade us good-day in Breton as they passed, and their peaceful faces had an old-world expression.

We found old women too, seated in the doorways of ancient grey granite cottages buried amidst trees, taking care of the little children ; these old women had long white locks

of unkempt hair, and wore tatters of blue cloth cut in old-fashioned style, with relics of Breton embroidery and butterflies' eyes : they were a picture of the barbaric misery of former days.

Every lane was lined with ferns, the finest, rarest, and most delicate species growing in tufts or carpeting these damp shady spots. There were purple foxgloves too, shooting up their nodding spires, and brighter still, the Breton catchfly, dotting the fresh verdure with its carmine stars.

Possibly the verdure seemed still greener, the woods more silent, and the fragrance sweeter, to men accustomed to live on planks in the midst of stormy waters.

"I like this very much," said Yves. "In a little while, when Pierre gets big enough to hold my hand, we will go into the woods together and pick up all sorts of things, and then we will shoot. As soon as I am rich enough, I will buy a gun and shoot the wolves. I feel as if I should never tire of this country——"

I knew only too well how soon he would tire of it, but it was no use saying so, and I left him to enjoy himself like a child.

Besides, he would have to leave soon ; he was to follow me to Brest in a couple of days, in order to sail again. This visit to Toulven was simply a Breton interlude, a momentary lull in our ordinary sea-faring life.

Presently we found ourselves quite among the woods ; all the lanes and cottages had been left far behind ; nothing was to be seen but hill rising after hill, covered with scrub, beech, oak, and heather. Flowers abounded everywhere, the whole country looked an Eden ; there were honeysuckles, tall white spikes of asphodel, and pink spikes of foxglove.

The cuckoo was singing in the distant woods, and the bees humming round us.

Here and there bilberries were to be found growing on the

rocky soil amidst flowering heath. Anne was always the one to find the finest, and she gave me a great many. Yves watched us gravely, feeling himself called upon, much to his surprise, to play the unaccustomed part of mentor.

It was a wild spot. These wooded hills and patches of lichen resembled some ancient landscape, not that they seemed to belong to any special period : Anne's costume however was perfectly medieval, and imparted the same air to her surroundings.

It was not the gloomy twilight medieval epoch imagined by Gustave Doré, but one on which the sun shone, bringing a wealth of flowers, these same unchanging wild flowers of Gaul, which bloomed for our ancestors as now for us.

It was eleven o'clock by the time we returned to the Keremenens' cottage for dinner ; that summer was a very hot one in Brittany ; all the ferns and pink flowerets in the lanes were drooping under the fierce heat which penetrated even into these shades.

One o'clock came, and it was time for me to leave. I first went to kiss little Pierre, who continued to sleep on in his old oak cradle, as if four days had not yet rested him after his labours in entering the world.

Then I bid the others good-bye. Yves stood pensively by the door, waiting to accompany me to Toulven, where I was to take the *diligence* for the station at Bannalec. Anne and old Corentin chose to see me off too.

When I saw Toulven, with its grey belfry and melancholy pool, disappearing in the distance, a pang went to my heart. How many years would it be before I set eyes on Brittany again ? *My brother* and I were again separated, and an unknown future lay before us both. I felt anxious about him, for I saw gloomy clouds already looming on the horizon. And then I thought of these Keremenens, who had given me

such a cordial reception ; I could not help asking myself whether my poor dear Yves, with his sad failings and stubborn temper, would not bring sorrow to the thatched roof covered with tiny pink flowers.

## XL.

*November 1880.*

RATHER more than two years have elapsed.

Little Pierre was feeling cold, and cried as he nursed the tiny hands he was trying to hide under his pinafore. He was in a street in Brest, before daybreak, one November morning, under a drizzling rain. He was nestling close to his mother, and she was crying too.

Marie Kermadec was waiting at this corner, wandering up and down in the dark like a disorderly character. Would Yves be coming home ? Where was he ? Where had he been spending the night ? What tavern had he been in ? Would he be on board again when the gun fired, in time to answer the roll-call ?

There were other women standing about as well.

One went by with her husband, a quartermaster like Yves ; he had come out of a tavern that had just opened, and was intoxicated. He tried to walk, took a few steps forward, and then fell heavily, his head resounding against the hard granite.

“Jesus, Holy Virgin, have pity on us !” moaned the woman ; “I never saw him like this before !”

Marie Kermadec helped her to raise him. He was good-looking, and had a grave gentle countenance.

The woman thanked her and made him walk on, supporting him so far as she was able.

Little Pierre went on crying quietly, as though he understood already that some disgrace was impending, and that he must not make a noise ; he hung down his head, and hid his cold little hands under his pinafore. He was well wrapped up too, but he had been standing so long at the corner of this camp street. The gas lamps had just been put out, and it was very dark. How had this poor healthy little plant, brought up in the fresh air among the Toulven woods, suddenly come into contact with the misery of a town ? He did not know how to account for the change, not being old enough to understand why his mother had chosen to follow her husband to Brest, and live in a dark cold room inside a court, in one of the low streets bordering on the harbour.

Another man went past ; he was beating his wife, and would not let her take him home ; this was horrible. Marie shrieked when she heard the hollow thud of a blow struck on the chest ; then she hid her face, for what could she do ? Yves had never been as bad as that, never. But would it ever come to this ? Would she be forced some day to endure even this last stage of misery ?

At length Yves made his appearance, with his head erect and his step steady, but his eye looked vacant and glassy. He saw his wife, but took no notice of her as he passed, only casting a dull glance of irritation that way.

He was not himself at the moment, as he would declare afterwards in the penitent fits which still recurred.

It was quite true ; it was the savage brute in his nature that came to the surface when he was in liquor, and his better self became obscured.

Marie took care not to say a word, not merely of reproach, but even of entreaty. If she had taken any notice when his brain was clouded, he would have gone off again at once. She knew this, and had trained herself to be silent.

She followed him in the rain with her head drooping, holding little Pierre by the hand, who was trying to stifle his tears now that he had seen his father, and was wetting his poor little feet in the gutter. How could she have let him walk about so much, or even have brought him out thus before daybreak? What had she been thinking of? She must have lost her senses. Then she caught him up in her arms and pressed him close to her bosom, trying to warm him.

Yves pretended to pass the door, to see what she would do, —a brutal jest—and then glanced round with a stupid smile that wounded her, as if to say: “I was only teasing you, but I mean to come in, you see.”

She kept following at some distance, creeping along the walls of the dark staircase in a very humble, deprecating manner. Fortunately it was not yet daylight, so the neighbours would not be astir to witness her shame.

She followed him into their room and closed the door. There was no fire, and the place looked miserable.

As soon as Marie had lighted a candle, she saw that Yves had again torn his new clothes, which she had mended so carefully for the first time; his large blue collar was crumpled and dirtied, and the meshes of his striped jersey broken, so that it gaped open, exposing his chest.

He paced to and fro like a caged animal, knocking down everything she had put in order, and scattering the pieces of bread she had collected together.

When she had put the child into his cot again and tucked him well up, she affected to busy herself about household matters. On these occasions she had to be a good actress, for if she had seemed to watch him, he would have fired up at once, like a wild beast smelling blood, and off he would have started. If he once said: “Well, I am off! I shall go

and join my companions!" he was as stubborn as a mule; there was no detaining him either by force, tears, or entreaties.

Sometimes Yves would suddenly drop down as if he were dead; then he slept for several hours, and was all right again. It all depended on what kind of spirits he had taken. At other times he managed to keep on his legs, one could hardly tell how, and returned to his vessel, which was lying in port (as part of the Reserve), to get through his duties as best he could.

#### XLI.

THAT morning, when seven o'clock came, Yves was beginning to rouse a little from the effects of his potations, and having thought of dipping his head into some icy cold water, went out, directing his steps towards the arsenal.

Then Marie sat down quite exhausted by the side of the little cot in which the child had fallen asleep.

Some pale gleams of light were beginning to enter through the uncurtained windows, looking wan and chill.

Another day lay before her! The noise peculiar to the low parts of Brest at these early hours might be heard in the street; the tramp of thousands of wooden sabots over the hard granite pavements. The workmen were going to the arsenal, stopping on their way for more brandy at half-opened dramshops, where the sallow light of tiny lamps blended with the faint light of day.

Marie still sat motionless; her senses were rendered more acute by suffering, and she could discriminate the familiar ~~ses~~ which rose from the streets these winter mornings, the ~~h~~ ; tipsy voices, and the clatter of sabots. She was living in one of the large, old, many-storied houses with dark courts

and walls of unhewn granite, thick as ramparts, which accommodated all sorts of inmates, workmen, pensioners, sailors ; twenty drunken families at least. It was four months since she had left Toulven to come and live here, after Yves' return from the Antilles.

The light was penetrating more decidedly through the windows by this time, falling on the sordid walls, from which the plaster was peeling and gradually becoming diffused throughout the large room, in which their modest little belongings, now so much disordered, seemed nearly lost. It was evidently daylight now, so she rose and blew out the candle, to save it, and then returned to her seat.

What should she do that day ? Should she work ? No, she had no spirit for it ; besides, what was the good ?

She would have to spend another day brokenhearted, without any fire, watching the rain fall and waiting !—waiting with an anxiety that kept constantly increasing till nightfall, when the clatter of the sabots would again be heard along the gloomy street, as the men returned from their work. Yves and the other sailors whose vessels were in port were dismissed at the same hour as the workmen in the arsenal, and thus she stood at her window every night to see this human tide sweep along, scanning with eager eyes the farthest groups, in search of the man who was ruining her life.

His tall figure and erect carriage enabled her to recognise him in the distance ; his blue collar overtopped all the rest. When she saw him walking rapidly, as if he were hastening home, a load seemed taken from her heart, and she breathed more freely ; when she saw him enter through the low doorway beneath, she felt almost happy. He came in ; and when he was really there and had kissed both herself and little Pierre, the danger was over, for he would not be going out again.

If, however, he was late in making his appearance, her anguish kept increasing every minute. And when the time had passed, and night came, and the crowd of men dispersed without bringing him home, then one of those dreadful evenings she knew only too well lay before her—long expectant evenings, during which she sat in a chair by the open door, clasping her hands in prayer, while her ear was strained to catch every snatch of the sailors' songs outside, and she trembled at the sound of every footfall on the dark staircase.

Then, when it had grown quite late, and her neighbours were gone to bed and could not see her, she went down into the street ; there she stood waiting at some corner in the cold or rain, as though she had lost her senses, listening at the doors of dram-shops where men were still drinking, or laying her white cheek close to the windows of some tavern.

## XLII.

LITTLE Pierre was still sleeping in his cot, as if to make up for the time he had lost before daybreak. And this morning his mother, too, was dozing by his side in her chair, worn out with weary watchings.

The pale day was already old when she woke, her limbs numb with cold. As soon as she recalled where she was, her anguish returned.

Why had she left Toulven ? Why had she ever married ? What was she, a poor country girl, doing here in Brest, where they stared at her peasant costume ? Why was she dragging her deep white collar through the streets of a town, to be drenched through with rain, or to hang limp and nipt on her shoulders, as, in her despair and disgust, it allowed to do now ?

She had tried every means of reclaiming Yves, and in vain. Yet he was still so kind and gentle, and so fond of his little son whenever he was in his senses, that a ray of hope often returned. He had fits of sincere penitence, which lasted several days, and what happy days these were !

“ You must forgive me,” he would say, “ you must see that I was not myself then ! ”

She forgave him, and then they were inseparable ; whenever there happened to be a fine day, they would dress little Pierre in his new clothes and all go out for a walk together.

Then, some fine evening, nothing was seen of Yves ; it was the old story over again, and she relapsed into despair.

He was getting worse and worse ; his residence at Brest was affecting him as it does most sailors. He got tipsy every week now ; it was becoming *a habit*. How could she hope ?

There was no money left in their drawer now. What must she do ? Borrow from the women who lived near her, and sometimes themselves drank ? She could not do that for very shame, she did not wish to have any intercourse with them. Yet she was at her wits' end how to conceal her distress from her parents, who knew nothing about it, and had become as fond of Yves as if he had been their own son.

She would tell them how unworthy he was of their affection. Her soul rebelled within her ; she would leave this man, it was more than she could bear, and he had no heart.

Something, however, told her that he had a heart after all ; but he was a grown-up child who had been spoiled by his sailor life. Her heart softened as she thought of his calm, noble countenance, his voice, and his smile in happy moments when he was yet sober.

Should she leave him ? The mere idea of abandoning him entirely to himself, to lose every vestige of respectability in his own vices and those of others, to plunge again into a life

of debauch with strange women, sail away, and then die the drunkard's death—solitary and forsaken—oh, this horrified her more than any other idea! She became conscious that she was linked to him now by a bond stronger than human reason or will. She loved him passionately, yet was unconscious of the magnanimity of her love. Well, if she could not rescue him, she must let him drag her down to the lowest depths rather than let anything short of death part her from him!

### XLIII.

LITTLE Pierre did not like Brest at all; he thought it a gloomy, ugly place.

He had only been there four months, yet his round cheeks were already beginning to grow pale under their bronzed complexion. They used to look like those ripe nectarines from the south, which glow with such warm golden tints, touched with a sunny red.

His jet black eyes were as bright as his mother's, and fringed with long drooping lashes. There was a grave character about his little eyebrows which reminded me of Yves.

He looked quite a picture with his thoughtful expression, and had a manly resolute air far beyond his years.

He was still merry and noisy at times, and would jump round and round the melancholy room, making all the disturbance he could. These gambols, however, were becoming much less frequent than when he was at Toulven. In a vague childish way he missed the little playfellows he used to meet in the beech lane, and his grandparents' caresses, and his old grandmother's songs. Every one noticed him at Toulven, and here he was nearly always alone.

He was quite sure he did not like town. Besides, he was always cold in that bare room and on this old stone staircase.

## XLIV.

“You must forgive me; you know I was not myself.” When Yves had once said this, he was all right again, but the words were often a long time in coming. After the intoxication had subsided, he would continue to look dull and morose, never speaking, till a smile suddenly began to play again upon his lips with a childish look of confusion. Then poor Marie felt happy again, and smiled back upon him in a peculiar way, without one word of reproach; her trial had come to an end.

Once, she ventured to say gently: “At any rate, do not go on sulking for three days after it is all over.”

Then he replied in a still lower tone, with a very faint smile and confused manner, not daring to look her in the face:

“You tell me not to go on sulking for three days after? Can you think I feel pleased with myself after behaving like that? It is not you that I am vexed with, you may be sure, my poor Marie.”

Then she drew closer to him, and leaned against his shoulder, and he, seeing what she wanted, kissed her.

“Oh! this drink! this drink!” said he slowly, averting his half closed eyes with a savage expression. “My father! my brothers! and now it has come to my turn!”

He had never said anything of the sort before. He never used to talk of this terrible vice, or appear to distress himself about it.

How could she help still hoping when she saw him look

so docile and good again, as he played with his child by the fireside, or forgot his lordly airs to show his wife numberless pretty little attentions, in order to make her forget all she had been suffering ?

How was it possible to credit that this Yves might speedily and irrevocably become the gloomy, morose, brutal fellow, the sot whom nothing could influence ? And Marie lavished more and more affection on him, devoting all her energies to him, watching over him like a little child, trembling as she followed him with her eyes, when he went out into the streets where his blue-collared mates were passing, and the dram-shops stood open.

Yves was lost on land ; he felt this himself, and told himself sadly that he must try to go to sea again.

He had grown up there, at the mercy of any chance influence, like a wild plant. Little trouble had been taken to give him any ideas of propriety or duty, or anything else. Providence and his mother's entreaties had thrown me in his way, and I was perhaps the first person who had tried to instil these feelings into him, but it was either too late, or my words had been too vague. The discipline of the navy had been the only check on his outward life ; it had maintained in him the rude wholesome austerity which makes the sailor strong.

He had got into the habit of regarding the land as a place for spending a short holiday, where he was his own master and could always find women ; he took possession of it like a conquered country in the short intervals of his long voyages, with plenty of money at his disposal, and made everything give in to his muscular strength and caprice in the haunts where he frequented.

It did not suit his sailor habits at all to live a domestic in small quarters, regulating his daily expenses, exercis-

ing self-control and providing for the morrow. Besides, the very walls of this mouldering corrupt town of Brest seemed to reek of spirits as well as unwholesome damp. Thus he was becoming degraded like many another good brave fellow before him ; he was gradually sinking to the level of the drunken population around him, and taking to the vulgar, repulsive debauch of the common working-man.

One day I received a letter calling me to the rescue. It was very simple, and might have been written by a child :—

“ **MY KIND BROTHER**,—I don’t know how to tell you, but it is true, I have taken to drinking. I did not want to stay in Brest, you know, for I was afraid of this.

“ I have already been put in irons three times since I have been in the Reserve, and now I don’t know how to get away, though I can see something dreadful will happen if I remain.

“ If I could only sail again on the same ship with you, I think it would all come right. You are going soon, and if you would only come to Brest, like a kind brother, and take me off with you, I am sure it would be better for me than staying here, and I might be saved yet.

“ It hurt me very much to read what you said in your letter about my not caring for my wife or child ; for there is nothing in the world I would not do for her and my little Pierre.

“ Yes, kind brother, you made me cry, and I am crying now while I write, and the tears prevent me from seeing.

“ My only hope is that you will come. With much love, and begging you not to forget your brother in spite of all the trouble he gives you.—Your affectionate

“ **YVES KERMADEC.**”

## XLV.

ONE Sunday in December I came back to Brest without giving any notice of my movements, and went down into the low quarter near the Grand Rue, in search of Yves' quarters. I read the numbers on the doors as I passed in front of the lofty granite houses, which were once wealthy mansions, and have now been converted into dwellings for the poor. On the ground floor open dram-shops were everywhere to be seen, surmounted by windows with shabby curtains, and a few sickly flowers fastened to sticks, with dead chrysanthemums in pots.

It was early morning, and groups of sailors were already walking about in their nice clean dress, singing by way of commencing their Sunday holiday.

The air was thick with white mist ; there was a damp freshness which betokened winter. I had just left the Adriatic still bathed in sunshine, and this made the atmosphere of Brest appear all the more dismal.

When I reached No. 154, and found myself under the sign of "The Handsome Gunner," I ascended three flights of a wide old staircase, and found the Kermadecs' room.

The measured rocking of a cradle was audible outside the door. Little Pierre was tolerably spoiled, and still required to be rocked to sleep, and there sat Yves by his side, alone with his son.

He raised his sad face, and seemed grateful to me for coming but scarcely ventured to advance to meet me ; his expression seemed to say that he knew I had come in compliance with his wishes, but he had scarcely expected me so soon, and it would be a sore trial to leave.

His appearance was much changed. He looked much

paler, and when his face had lost its sea-tan, it looked less resolute and almost sorrowful. It was easy to see that he had been suffering a good deal, but vice had not yet left its impress on his grave, colourless, marble features.

I glanced round with a feeling of surprise and pain ; I had not realized the sort of home my brother Yves was likely to have on shore, and in a town. It was very different from his home at sea, where I had known him so long, the tops exposed to full sun and wind. I felt in a strange land, and ill at ease in this poverty-stricken abode, and, no doubt, it had the same effect on him.

Marie had gone out to the fountain, and little Pierre lay fast asleep, with his long eyelashes drooping on his cheeks. We were alone, and he seemed shy of thus meeting me face to face, and began to talk at once about leaving and finding a vessel.

A change made in the lists of embarkation placed me at the head of those about to sail from Brest. Two or three vessels were to be fitted for sailing to China, the Southern Seas, and the Levant, so we should have to be ready any hour to sail for one or other of these destinations.

The ensuing week was one of those restless periods which often vary a nautical existence. I was living a sort of camp life at the hotel in the midst of half unpacked trunks, not knowing where I should be on the morrow ; busy with all sorts of things on service in the harbour, and preparing for the coming voyage, besides going to and fro on Yves' account, to contrive to get him transferred from the Reserve, and to keep him under my eye, ready to start when I did.

The short, dark December days slipped away very rapidly. I often ran up the Kermadecs' wretched old staircase, taking four steps at a time ; and Marie, who was always anxious to

hear the first words that fell from my lips, greeted me with a faint smile, and resigned herself respectfully to my decision.

## XLVI.

IN THE ROADSTEAD OF BREST, Dec. 23, 1880.

IT is a clear, frosty December night, and there is a great calm at sea, and everything on board very quiet. Yves and I are seated side by side on open trunks and boxes in a tiny cabin, the iron walls of which are painted white. We are still in the midst of all the upset of our arrival, and must set to work to put everything ship-shape and make ourselves at home in the small vessel which is soon to take us out into the wintry surges or breakers.

All the projects of embarkations and long voyages had come to nothing. So here I was, after all, on the *Sèvre*, which was not quitting the coasts of Brittany. Yves had formed one of the ship's company since morning, and here we were together again, in all human probability, for the next twelve months. Considering our roving calling, we had been very fortunate, for any moment might have torn us asunder. Yves had thankfully handed over a hundred francs to the sailor who had consented to let him step into his shoes.

We may as well make the best of this *Sèvre* since we find ourselves here. It will remind us of days gone by when we used to sail on these foggy waters, commanded by *the pierced belfry*.

Still, I would rather have been despatched elsewhere—to some sunnier clime; and I could have wished it more, espe-

cially for Yves' sake, that I might take him further away from Brest, from evil companions and the taverns on the coast.

AT SEA, *December 25th, Christmas Day.*

We had reached the beginning of the second day ; it was very early, and I came on deck, having had scarcely any sleep after a very hard watch, lasting from midnight to 4 A.M. We had been tossing about all night with a high wind and heavy sea.

Yves was there, wet through, but quite in his element, and as soon as he caught sight of me, he smiled and pointed to the singular coast we were approaching.

A line of grey cliffs rose on the distant horizon like a long rampart. The waters were becoming comparatively calm, though the wind seemed still raging. Dark lowering clouds were scudding swiftly through the sky overhead ; the whole of the leaden vault seemed in motion, the large heavy masses kept changing their shape, as if eager to move forward before they became dizzy and fell. Thousands of shoals lay around us, black rocks reared their heads in the midst of the silvery foam produced by the breakers, like an immense flock of marine animals. These dangerous black rocks abounded as far as the eye could reach, the sea was dotted over with them. And over yonder, on the distant cliff, might be descried the outline of three ancient belfries ; they looked as if they rose from a granite desert, one of the three soaring far above the others, like a giant watching our movements and mounting guard over these seas.

Ah, yes ! I recognised it at once, and, like Yves, I greeted it with a smile, though I felt a little uneasy at seeing it reappear so close to us, under this gloomy sky, on a morning when we were not expecting to see it. What had brought

us into this neighbourhood ? It was no part of our plan, and I could not account for it.

The captain had suddenly altered our course during the hour I had been asleep ; he had decided to put into the Taureau roadstead, close to St Pol de Léon, in order to take shelter from the south wind, since the open sea had become too rough for us.

And thus, when Yves returned to these foggy waters, the first visit he paid was to his belfry.

CHERBOURG, December 27, 1880.

Yves was brought back this morning at seven o'clock, lying at the bottom of the boat dead-drunk. Some old friends from the *Venus* had been dragging him from one tavern to another all the night through, in order to do honour to their return from the Antilles.

It was my watch. There was no one yet on deck except a few sailors busy polishing, faithful men whom I had long known and could trust. Four of them took hold of him, passed him quietly down through one of the hatches, and hid him in my cabin.

This was a bad start on board the *Sèvre*, where I had taken him to keep him under my eye, and where he had promised to be so exemplary in his conduct. The gloomy idea crossed my mind for the first time that he was a hopeless subject, no matter what I did to save him from himself, and then came the still more heartrending thought that perhaps he was heartless after all.

The whole of that day, Yves lay like a corpse.

He had lost his cap, his purse, and his silver whistle, and had cut his head open.

It was not till six o'clock that night that he gave the least signs of life. Then he smiled as a child might on awaking

(a proof that he was still in liquor), and asked for something to eat.

I said to my faithful attendant, Jean-Marie, a fisherman from Audierne :

“ Go to the steward’s room and ask for some soup.”

Jean-Marie brought the soup, and Yves began to twirl his spoon round and round, as if he could not remember which was the right end to hold.

“ Come, Jean-Marie, feed him !”

“ It is too salt !” exclaimed Yves suddenly, in a strong Breton accent, drawing back and pulling a face, while he kept his eyes half closed.

“ Too salt ! Far too salt !”

Then he fell asleep again, and Jean-Marie and I burst out laughing.

I did not feel at all merry, still the speech and manner were too droll, reminding one of a spoiled child.

By ten o’clock Yves had come to himself again and stolen away.

For the next two days he kept out of sight in the forecastle among the crew, only coming up for his watch or to climb the rigging, when he hung his head and did not dare to look at me.

Alas ! for resolutions made again and again and never kept ! How could he venture to make them once more, or at any rate to allude to them ? So he allowed himself to sink down and remain inert, and the days slipped by while he waited vainly for his courage and self-respect to return.

By degrees, however, we resumed our usual habits. I called him to me in the evening, and he used to pace up and down the deck by my side in the long automatic walk which sailors often take for hours on the same planks. We chatted

very much as we used to do, under the mournful wind or drizzling rain. He had still the same child-like but thoughtful way of expressing his ideas; and yet a sort of constraint, an icy wall, had grown up between us which nothing seemed to melt. I waited for a penitent speech which never came.

Winter was passing over, the Channel winter which shrouds our ideas as well as persons and things in its grey gloom. The dismal cold had set in, and we took our evening walk at an ever-quickenning pace, as we encountered the moist winds.

Sometimes I longed to grasp him by the hand and say : "Come, brother, I have forgiven you ; let us think no more about it," yet the words did not pass my lips, for, after all, it was his place to ask my forgiveness ; so I maintained a sort of chilly reserve, which alienated him from me.

This voyage on the *Sèvre* was certainly anything but a success.

## XLVII.

LITTLE Pierre is at Plouherzel, trying to play in front of his grandmother's door, and feeling far from home as he looks at the sheet of motionless water in the distance, and the big animal apparently sleeping in the middle, all shrouded in mist. There is plenty of fresh air all around, certainly, but the wind is keener here than at Toulven, and the landscape looks more desolate. Children are unconsciously influenced by external impressions : when things look dreary, they feel melancholy and grow silent, very much like little birds.

Two other tiny children have come from a neighbouring cottage to look at the new-comer. But they do not come from

Toulven ; their games are not the same, and the few words they can say are not in the same dialect. Thus they cannot make many advances, but stand looking at one another with tiny smiles and droll faces.

Little Pierre had arrived at Plouherzel with Marie KermaDEC the day before. Yves had written to his wife to go down there at once ; he had suddenly taken the idea into his head, hoping it might reconcile his mother. The old woman, who had always been harsh and self-willed, had first refused her consent to the marriage, and only conceded it at the last with an ill grace, never answering any letters they had written afterwards.

The poor old woman was left desolate indeed ! Of the thirteen children God had given her, three had died young. The eight sons who grew up all became sailors, and the sea had robbed her of seven ; they had all been lost in shipwrecks or else gone far away like Gildas and Goulven.

Her daughters had married and left her. The two youngest remained at home till one married an *Icelander*, who took her off to Tréguier, and the other became imbued with religious fancies, and entered the convent of the Dames de St Gildas du Secours.

The only one left to her was Goulven's deserted child,—illegitimate certainly,—still the grandmother clung to this last spar of the prolonged shipwreck of all her hopes. The little girl was fond of going to the edge of the salt water lake to see the tide come in. In spite of prohibitions, she had made her way down one day all alone, and never came back. The returning tide washed to shore a little waxen figure, which was laid to rest by the side of the chapel, under a wooden cross and a grassy mound.

One hope still remained in her son Yves, the youngest and the dearest, because he had been at home longer than

the rest. Some day, perhaps, he might come back and live near her !

But no, this Marie Keremenen had carried him off, and, at the same time, which added to the bitterness, she had robbed her of the supplies of money by which her son had been in the habit of assisting her.

For the last two years she had been left alone, alone for the rest of her days.

In obedience to Yves' directions, Marie had taken a two days' journey, and had knocked at the door with her child the night before. It was opened by a harsh-featured old woman, whom she recognised instantly, though she had never seen her.

“ I am Marie, Yves' wife. How are you, mother ? ”

“ Yves' wife ! Yves' wife ! Why, then, this must be my grandson, little Pierre ? ”

Her eye had softened as she looked at the child. She brought them in, gave them a good meal and a good fire, and made up her best bed for them, and yet an icy reserve prevailed which nothing seemed able to melt.

The grandmother would kiss and fondle the child secretly in a corner, but never openly in Marie's presence ; before her she was always harsh and austere.

Sometimes they talked about Yves, and Marie said, timidly, that he had improved very much since they were married.

“ Improved—fiddlesticks ! ” repeated the old mother in her bitter manner. “ Don't tell me ; he has just the same head as his father, and it will be the same story over again ; you have not seen the end of it yet, I can tell you.”

Then poor Marie's heart felt heavy, and she could not tell what to answer, nor what to talk about or to do all day long. She waited impatiently for the end of the time fixed by

Yves for her visit, and told herself that she should never come again.

Marie was leaving Paimpol, and had seated herself in the diligence with her child. It was rumbling away, and she looked back through the window at her mother-in-law, who had actually left Plouherzel to accompany them as far as the town, but had bidden them an icy farewell, so curt as to be wounding.

Marie looked out, and could not understand what she saw ; the old woman was running, running after the coach, and then her face altered and looked distorted. What could she want with them ? Marie felt half frightened as she looked. The old woman seemed to be pulling faces still. Ah ! she was crying ! Her features became perfectly contorted, and tears were actually running down her cheeks. The pair understood each other now.

“ For heaven’s sake, sir, pray stop the coach,” said Marie to an Icelander who was seated next to her, and understood it all, too ; he passed his arm through the little square opening in front, and plucked the driver by the sleeve. The coach stopped. The old grandmother had been running all the time and was close behind, almost touching the step ; she held out her arms, and her face was bathed in tears. Marie stepped out, and the old woman clasped her in her arms, and kissed both her and little Pierre.

“ Oh, my dear daughter, the Lord be with you ! ” she sobbed ; “ and oh, my daughter, you must be very gentle with Yves, and guide him by love ; you will see that it is possible to be happy with him. Maybe I was too harsh with his poor father. God bless you, my dear child ! ”

Then both began to cry, feeling themselves united by their common love for Yves,

“ Come now,” cried the driver, “ how long do you women mean to stand rubbing noses together ? ”

They were forced to part. Then Marie sat again in her corner, fixing her tearful eyes on the aged figure they were leaving behind ; the old woman had sank down sobbing on a stone by the roadside, while little Pierre’s chubby hand was waving farewells through the window.

### XLVIII.

*January 1, 1881.*

HERE we are inside the arsenal at Brest, a little before day-break on the first morning of the new year. This dockyard is a dismal spot, and the *Sérre* has been anchored here for the last week.

The sky is beginning to show faintly between the great granite walls by which we are surrounded. The solitary lamps, lying far apart, show their expiring yellow jets through the fog. Outlines of formidable objects are already becoming visible, awaking conceptions of cruel rigidity ; machines are perched aloft, and enormous anchors raise their black flukes amidst all sorts of hideous, vague shapes, while dismantled vessels lie motionless on their chains, their enormous hulls resembling lifeless monsters.

Dead silence and a chilly creepiness seem to reign in this harbour.

There is no solitude to compare with that of a naval dock-yard by night, especially on holidays. As soon as the gun is about to fire the signal of dismissal, every one scampers off as if the air were pestilential ; thousands of men pop out everywhere, swarming like ants on their way to the gates. Those in the rear run, lest they should arrive too late and find them closed. Then silence ensues, night falls, and all is solitude.

From time to time the watch patrols, challenged by the sentinels and whispering the pass-word. And then a silent army of rats come out of their holes and take possession of the deserted ships and empty workshops.

I had been keeping guard on board since evening, and had gone to bed very late, in my cold cabin with the iron walls. I felt uneasy about Yves, and the songs and shouts of sailors, which reached me from a great distance that night, rising from the worst quarters of the town, made me melancholy.

Marie and little Pierre had gone down on their expedition to Plouherzel in Goëlo, yet Yves had resolved to spend the evening on shore in Brest, to see the new year in with some of his old friends. I might have detained him by asking him to stay and keep me company, but there was still the icy barrier between us, and so I let him go. Yet this night of the 31st of December was one of the most dangerous in the year, for all Brest seems to go wild then with a passion for spirits.

As I came on deck, I greeted the new year rather sadly, and began to pace up and down with my usual mechanical step while on watch, thinking of many things long past.

I brooded especially over Yves, who occupied my thoughts almost incessantly just then. During the last fortnight we had spent on the *Sèvre*, I fancied I could see myself gradually losing the affection of the unsophisticated brother who had long been the only real friend I possessed in the world. I was angry with him, too, for not behaving better, and the affection between us seemed diminishing on my side also.

A sable bird passed over my head with a melancholy croak. "There it goes!" said a sailor, who was performing his morning ablutions in icy water under cover of the darkness, "what a new year's greeting! That wretched bird of ill-omen; it bodes us no good!"

At seven o'clock Yves came on board again, walking quite steadily, and answering the roll-call, after which he came up to me as usual to say good morning.

There was a dull look in his eye and a slight huskiness in his voice, which told me at once that he must have been drinking a little, so I said curtly, in an authoritative tone : "Yves, you must not go on shore again to-day."

Then I turned away to speak to some of the other men, ill at ease, for I knew my manner had been harsh.

Noon came, and the arsenal and vessels became empty and deserted as usual on great holidays. Sailors were everywhere to be seen, issuing forth in their Sunday clothes, hastily brushing themselves down, arranging each other's large blue collars, and then making for the gates at a rapid pace on their way to the town.

When the turn of the *Sèvre's* crew came, Yves appeared with the rest, well brushed and washed, in his best clothes, with his chest exposed.

"Where are you going, Yves ?"

He eyed me with a vicious expression that was quite new to me, a defiant glance that spoke plainly of the lingering effects of spirits.

"I am on my way to join my friends," said he, "sailors from my own part of the country ; I promised to come, and they are expecting me."

Then I took him aside and tried to argue with him. I was obliged to speak hastily, for time was pressing, obliged, too, to speak in a low tone and preserve a calm manner, in order to gloss over the scene in the presence of the rest of the crew who were standing close by. I felt all the while that I had not gone to work in the right way ; I was not quite myself, and was losing all patience. I spoke in the tone which irritates, but does not persuade.

"I *will* go, I swear!" he concluded by saying in a tremulous voice, setting his teeth; "you shall not stop me to-day, unless you clap me into irons."

And he shook me off, braving me openly for the first time in his life, as he made to join the others.

"Into irons? Well then, Yves, I shall put you in!"

And summoning a sergeant-at-arms, I spoke up and ordered him to take Yves off.

Oh! what a look my brother gave me as he went, forced to follow the sergeant-at-arms who was taking him off to the hold in his best clothes before the assembled crew! He was quite sobered now, for his eyes were clear and his expression pensive. It was my turn to droop my head, as I encountered the reproachful glance which betokened painful surprise and sudden disappointment and contempt.

Then I went back to my cabin.

Was it all over between us now? I feared so. I must have lost him for ever.

I knew that his Breton temperament would not suffer him to return: if his heart once closed, it would never open again.

I had abused my authority over him, and he was one of those who resist force and never yield.

I had begged the officer on guard to leave me on duty for the rest of the day, for I had no heart to quit the vessel, and there I kept pacing up and down these eternal planks.

The arsenal lay deserted within its high walls. There was no one else on deck. Snatches of distant song came wafted across from the low streets of Brest. And from the forecastle rose the voices of the sailors on guard, shouting out their *loto* numbers at regular intervals, and accompanying them with the time-honoured nautical witticisms which always raise a laugh:

“Twenty-two, the two pursers pacing the deck !”

“Thirty-three, the legs of the head cook !”

while my poor Yves lay in the hold below, all in the dark, lying on the bare boards in this severe cold, with his foot fastened to the ring.

What shall I do ? Order him to be set at liberty and sent to me ? I could imagine the interview only too well, how he would stand there, fierce and impassive, taking off his cap most respectfully in my presence, yet braving me by keeping silence and averting his eyes.

Besides, supposing he refused to come—and he was quite capable of doing so at this moment—how could I possibly pass over a refusal to obey, or save him in the end ? How ever was I to get him out of this muddle between our private affairs and matters of rigid discipline ?

Night was closing in by this time, and Yves had lain nearly five hours in irons. I thought of little Pierre and Marie, of the good folk at Toulven who had put such faith in me, and then of an oath I had sworn to an aged mother at Plouherzel.

I became aware now that I had still a brotherly affection left for my poor Yves. I returned to my cabin and wrote to him at once ; that was the only way of communicating with him, for, with our respective tempers, no explanations would be of any avail. I made haste and wrote in large characters, that he might manage to read it, for the day was fast declining, and lights are prohibited in the dockyard. Then I told the sergeant-at-arms to go to Kermadec, and bring him to my cabin to speak to the officer of the watch. I had written as follows :—

“DEAR BROTHER,—I forgive you, and beg that you will forgive me too. You know that we are brothers now, and,

in spite of everything, this is a matter of life and death to us both. Will you choose to forget all that we have said and done on board this *Sèvre*, and will you try to make another grand resolution to do better for the future ? I ask this in your mother's name. Just write 'Yes' at the bottom of this paper, won't you ? and then it will be all settled, and we need never allude to it again. "PIERRE."

When Yves appeared, I neither looked at him nor waited for an answer, merely saying :

"Read what I have written here," and off I went, leaving him to himself.

He left the cabin directly, as if afraid of my returning, and as soon as I heard the sound of his retreating footsteps, I went to look.

He had written at the foot of my paper, in letters even larger than my own, for the light was still fainter :

"Yes, brother," and signed it "Yves."

"Jean-Marie, run at once and tell Yves that I am waiting for him on shore, by the quay !"

This was within ten minutes. We must meet face to face after having written, in order to complete our reconciliation.

When Yves came, his face looked quite different, and the genial smile, which I had missed for so long, was playing on it again. I took his hand, his horny seaman's hand, in mine. I had to grasp it very hard to make it feel the pressure.

"But why did you treat me so ? It was not kind of you!"

Those were all the words of reproach he addressed to me. We were not compelled to keep the night watch on board the *Sèvre*.

“Come, Yves, we will go and spend this first evening of the year together at Brest, and you shall dine opposite to me at the *Bourse*. That is a thing we have never done, and it will amuse us. Come, go and get your back brushed (he had picked up a great deal of dirt in the hold), and let us be off.”

“Oh, we shall have to make haste then. I would sooner brush myself in your room on shore. The gun is going to fire, and we shall never have time to get out.”

We happened to be at the further end of the harbour, a long way from the gates, and off we set, almost at a run. We had only got half way, when bang went the gun, and we found ourselves prisoners.

There was nothing for it but to return to the *Sèvre*, where all was so dark and cold.

In the mess-room we found no fire, but a wretched lantern in an iron cage, which the fireman on guard had lighted, so there we spent our first evening of this new year, having lost our dinner through our own fault, yet well pleased to have made peace and become true friends again.

Yves' mind, however, was not quite easy even yet.

“I ought to have thought of mentioning it sooner; perhaps it would have been wiser to have put me in irons again till to-morrow morning on account of the others, who may not quite understand, you know——”

But he was quite free from anxiety as to his future conduct, and very confident about himself that evening.

“I have thought of a way,” said he, “I will never go ashore again alone, but wait for you to take me. It must be all right then, you see!”

## XLIX.

SUNDAY, *March 31, 1881.*

SPRING has come at Toulven ; the lanes are full of primroses. The first balmy air has come and taken us by surprise, blowing through the oak and beech boughs and the great leafless woods, and bearing to this grey Brittany strange odours and suggestions of sunnier climes. The pale summer is on its way, bringing the long, sweet evenings in its train.

We are all standing at the cottage door, the two old Kermenens, Yves, his wife, Anne, little Corentine, little Pierre, and myself. The sound of some religious chanting had reached us from a distance, and was slowly approaching. It was a procession advancing at a measured pace, the first spring procession. Here it comes along the green lane ; it will pass right in front of us.

“ Lift me up, godfather—up !” says little Pierre, holding out his arms to cling round my neck, in order to see better.

But Yves claims him, and catching him up, makes him stand on his head ; then the little fellow laughs to find himself so tall, and thrusts his hands between the moss-grown branches of the venerable trees.

The Virgin’s banner passes, borne by two young men of grave demeanour. It is followed by all the men of Trémeulé and Toulven, bare-headed both young and old, holding their hats in their hands, while their long locks, either fair or whitened by age, hang down over Breton jackets trimmed with antique embroidery.

The women bring up the rear ; they wear black bodices embroidered all over with eyes, and there is a low murmur of Celtic words and a vibration of the high white muslin erections on their heads. Last of all comes the old midwife,

much bent, trotting along with short steps, and looking just as like an old fairy as ever. She gives a sign of recognition, and shakes her stick playfully at little Pierre.

They passed on, and the noise gradually died away in the distance, but we could still trace the procession winding along between the steep mossy banks, and filling the lane with winged caps and deep white collars.

On they went, still zigzagging up the hill towards St Eloi de Toulven. The tail of the procession had a very droll effect.

“Oh, look at those caps!” said Anne, who was the first to finish telling her beads, and she began to laugh at the comical aspect of so many white heads enlarged by these muslin cylinders.

The procession was gone now, it had vanished under the distant canopies of beech; all we could see now was the tender green of the lane, and the tufts of primroses scattered all around—early blossoms which do not wait to see the sun, but lie on the moss in large compact clusters of a pale sulphur yellow or milky amber. The Bretons call them “milk flowers.”

I took little Pierre by the hand and trotted him off to the woods, in order to leave Yves alone with his relations. They appeared to have important business to discuss—some of those questions of interest and partition which play such an important part in country life.

This time they have to talk over a project formed by both Yves and his wife, of realising all their money and building a cottage with a slated roof at Toulven. I am to have a room all to myself in this cottage, and they will furnish it with the old Breton things I am so fond of, and fill it with ferns and flowers. They do not wish to go on living in a large town, and, above all, not in Brest—*it does not suit Yves.*

"True, I shall not be able to live at home much," said he, "but when I do come, we shall be thoroughly happy here. Besides, I am looking to the future, you see, when I shall be able to retire. I shall be so comfortable in my house with my little garden."

When he retired! This is the sailor's dream from his earliest years, as if his present life were but a time of probation. He hopes to retire from the service when he approaches forty; to own some little corner of land for his own, settle down soberly and never leave it, after roving up and down the globe so long; occupy some office in his hamlet or parish, become a churchwarden instead of an old sea-dog; lay aside all his pranks and turn into a quiet old hermit. How many are cut off before they attain this peaceful stage of mature life! And yet, if you talk to them, you will find every man looking forward to it.

Yves' receipt for keeping straight had proved quite a success; on board ship, he was the exemplary seaman he had always been, and when he went ashore, we were never parted.

Ever since the terrible day by which the year '81 had opened, our relations had been changed, and I treated him now completely as my brother.

On the *Sèvre*, this tiny vessel where we officers lived on terms of the greatest intimacy, Yves now formed one of us. If we went to the theatre, he sat in our box; he joined our excursions and any of our expeditions. He was shy of doing this at first, and would decline or keep out of the way, but at length he yielded, for he felt how fond we all were of him. I hoped for great things from this new and possibly strange way of proceeding, by which I might bind him to me as closely as was practicable, and raise him above his past life and former friends.

My brother Yves had never received what is conventionally termed education, the veneer often applied so carelessly to many a man ; nature, however, had gifted him with a peculiar tact and delicacy of feeling much more rare and never to be acquired. When he was in our company, he always kept his own place, and thus came gradually to find himself at ease. He spoke little and never indulged in commonplaces. And when he doffed his sailor's dress for a well-cut grey suit and Suède gloves to match, he looked quite distinguished, though he still tossed his head back, and had the bronzed complexion and reckless manner.

It amused us to take him with us, and introduce him to worthy people who were impressed by his silence and powerful build, and thought him haughty. And it was amusing to see him become the thorough Jack Tar again next day, as good a seaman as ever he was.

Well, little Pierre and I had gone into the Toulven woods to pick flowers, while the family council sat.

We found plenty of pale yellow primroses, purple periwinkles, and blue borage, and even some pink catchflies, the first of the season.

Little Pierre gathered as many as he could, quite excited, never knowing which to run to first, and heaving deep sighs, as if oppressed by the hardest task ; he kept running to me with little handfuls of carelessly plucked blossoms, with scarcely any stem, all crumpled up in his wee fingers.

From the eminence on which we stood, we could see the woods stretching away to the horizon ; the blackthorn was already in flower, every branch and rosy spray was covered with buds, waiting for spring. Beneath us, the grey spire of Toulven church rose up among the woods.

We had been out so long that Corentine had been stationed in the green lane to give notice of our return. We could see

her in the distance, jumping and capering all by herself, with her big cap and collar flying in the wind. She shouted out: "Here they come, hand in hand, Pierre *brass* and Pierre *vienn*!" (big Pierre and little Pierre).

And she sang the words to a very lively Breton air, dancing and keeping time with her feet, like a little doll gone mad, while her big cap and collar fluttered in the breeze. Night was closing round us, the March night which looks always dismal, beneath the leafless vault formed by the venerable trees. A chilly shudder seemed suddenly to pass through the woods, a death-like chill after the warm sunny day.

The child sang of her little cousin Pierre as *Bugel-du*, (the little black fellow), the very name by which Yves had been known, owing to this same dark complexion peculiar to the Kermadecs. So I called her in return: *Moisel Vienn Penn-melen* (the little yellow-haired lady), and the nickname stuck to her, for it was very applicable, as her golden hair was always escaping from under her cap.

Every face in the cottage looked happy, and Yves took me aside to tell me how well it had all been arranged. Old Corentin was to give them two thousand francs, and an aunt would lend them another thousand. This would enable them to buy a plot of land at the proper time, and begin to build at once.

After dinner, we had to go off by coach from Toulven in order to catch the train at Bannalec. Yves and I were on our way back to Lorient, where our *Sèvre* was awaiting us in the harbour.

When we reached the lodgings we had taken in the town, towards eleven o'clock at night, Yves arranged our flowers from the Toulven woods in the vases.

It was the first time in his life he had ever done such a

thing ; he was surprised to find himself admiring the poor little wild blossoms of which he used to take no heed.

“ Well,” said he, “ when I get my little house at Toulven, I shall put some of these in our rooms, for they look very well. It is you now who have given me the idea of this sort of thing.”

L.

THE following day was the 1st of April, and found us again at sea, on our way to St Nazaire. All our sails were set, a strong breeze was blowing from the north-west, the weather was bad, and we could not see the lights. We entered the basin at daybreak, with our cat-head broken and the top-gallant mast sprung.

The 2nd was pay-day. Some of the men got tipsy and fell down the hold at night, cracking their skulls.

We had an unexpected leave of two days given us, so off I set with Yves for Trémeulé in Toulven. This *Sèvre* was a capital vessel, for she never kept us long away.

We reached the Keremenens' door by moonlight at ten o'clock that night, taking them and Marie by surprise. Little Pierre was lifted out of bed in honour of our visit, and seated on our knees ; he had been roused from his first sleep, so he smiled and murmured a greeting, and then took no further heed of us. He could not keep his eyes open, and his tiny head was nodding, first on one side, then on the other.

Yves was quite uneasy when he saw his head droop and his eyelids sink, as his hair fell into his eyes ; “ He looks so—so sulky, I think.”

Then he eyed me anxiously to know my opinion of the

matter, imagining some dreadful trouble awaiting him in the future.

My dear Yves is the only fellow in the world who could be so comically alarmed. I danced little Pierre about, and succeeded in waking him up thoroughly and making him crow, with his fine large eyes wide open under their long lashes. Then Yves took comfort and owned that there was no sulky look on his face now.

When his mother undressed him, he looked just like a classic infant, a Greek statue of Cupid.

## LI.

TOULVEN, *April 30th.*

Here we are, all assembled in the Keremenens' cottage at nightfall one April evening. Our party has just returned from a walk ; it consists of Yves, Marie, Anne, little Corentine *Penmelen*, and tiny Pierre *Bugel-du*.

Four candles are lighted in the cottage (*three* would be *the cat's wedding*, portending misfortune).

Paper, pens, and pounce have been laid ready on the massive oak table, polished by a succession of years. Seats have been arranged all round, in preparation for solemn proceedings.

We lay down our sheaves of grasses and flowers, which diffuse a scent of April through the dark cottage, and then we take our seats.

Enter two more worthy old dames with an air of importance, who bid us good evening, with a curtsey which makes their big stiff collars fly up to their ears, and then retire into corners. Then comes Pierre Kerbras, to whom Anne is engaged. At length our party is complete, and every one seated.

This is the great evening for a family conclave, in which the Keremenens are about to execute the promise made to their children. The aged pair rise and open an ancient chest, carved with alternate representations of cocks and the Sacred Heart ; they turn over papers and clothes till they find at the bottom a little bag which seems very heavy. Then on they go to their bed, turn back the mattress and hunt beneath it ; a second bag comes to light ! These they empty on the table in front of their son Yves, pouring out handsome gold and silver coins, stamped with ancient effigies, which have been gradually accumulating and sleeping for the last half century. They count them into little piles ; these are the two thousand francs promised.

Next comes the turn of the old aunt, who advances and empties a third little bag, containing another thousand francs in gold.

The aged neighbour is the last to step forward ; she has brought five hundred in a stocking foot. All this is to be lent to Yves, and is piled up before him. He signs two receipts on sheets of blank paper and hands them to the two aged dames, who curtsey, and are about to depart, but are detained, as custom prescribes, to drink a glass of cider with us.

The business is concluded, without the help of an attorney or legal forms or altercation, with an honest confidence characteristic of Toulven.

Then comes a ran-tan-tan at the door. This is the builder, who has arrived just at the right moment. Stamped paper is to be used in our dealings with him ; he is a 'cute old fellow from Quimper, who only half understands French, but seems civil enough all the same with his town-bred manners. -

I have undertaken to explain to him the plan of a house

which had been concocted between us during our evenings on shipboard, and in which *my room* figures. I discuss the construction in its minutest details, and the cost of all the materials, assuming an air of experience which impresses the old man, but makes Yves and myself laugh whenever our eyes chance to meet.

I write two pages of clauses and items on a sheet of paper bearing a twelve sous' stamp :

"The house to be built of granite, the mortar to be made of river sand, it is to be whitewashed and timbered with chestnut, to have a garden in front, a loft with a dormer window, pentroofs painted green, &c., &c., and to be all completed before the 1st of May in the year following, for the sum of 2950 francs as per agreement."

All this labour and head-work makes me feel very tired ; I am quite astonished at myself, and see all the bystanders admiring my foresight and economy ! What marvellous things these worthy people make me do ?

At length all the signatures and flourishes have been duly appended. We drink cider, and shake hands all round. So here is Yves a landowner in Toulven, and he and Marie both look so happy that I can never regret having taken this trouble.

The two worthy old dames make their farewell curtsies and go, and all the rest, including even little Pierre, who has asked to stay up, escort me to the inn by moonlight this beautiful evening.

TOULVEN, May 1, 1881.

Yves and I have been very busy since morning, measuring with a rope the land he means to buy, old Corentin Keremenen assisting us.

The first step was to choose a plot, and this took us nearly

the whole of yesterday morning. Yves felt it a very serious business to decide on the site of the cottage to which he looks forward to retiring, after an unknown and dreary interval, to live, spend his old age, and end his days.

After going backwards and forwards a good deal, we decided at length in favour of a site at the entrance to Toulven, near the road leading to Rosporden, an elevated point overlooking a tiny village square, which was enlivened that morning by a crowd of noisy fowls and rosy-cheeked children. It will command Toulven and the church on one side, and the great woods on the other.

At present, it is nothing but a field of green oats. We have measured it every way, and, according to the current value of the square metre, it will cost 1490 francs, not including the cost of transfer.

How steady and thrifty Yves will have to be to pay for it all! It makes him quite grave to think of it.

## LII.

### ON BOARD THE "SEVRE," *May 1881.*

YVES will soon be thirty years of age, and he begs me to bring him back a stout memorandum book when I go ashore, in order that he may begin to jot down his impressions as I do. He is even regretting that he cannot remember past dates and facts clearly enough to draw up a retrospective journal of his life.

His mind is opening to a whole host of novel ideas; it cannot be denied that he is fashioning himself on me as his model, and becoming rather more artificial than is desirable. Our intimacy, however, produces another result equally unexpected—I am growing more of a child of Nature through my contact with him, and am changing almost as much as he is.

BREST, June 1881.

At six o'clock on Midsummer Eve I was seated on the top of a country omnibus, returning with Yves from the *Pardon* at Plougastel.

Our *Sèvre* had been as far as Algiers in May, and the contrast led us to appreciate more keenly the peculiar charm of this Breton district.

The horses were galloping at full speed, covered with ribbons, and flags and green branches waving from their heads. The inside passengers were singing, and outside, close to us, three tipsy sailors were dancing with their caps all awry, flowers in their button-holes, ribbons, trumpets, and blue spectacles on their noses by way of a skit on short-sighted people. They were three young men with graceful figures and intelligent faces, who were out on the spree to the very last before sailing for China.

If they had been landsmen, they would have broken their necks, but, as it was, they kept their footing in spite of the liquor they had taken, and went on skipping like kids, while the coach dashed along, first into one gutter, then into the other, under the guidance of a drunken coachman.

We had found Plougastel all astir with the noise of a village fair, merry-go-rounds, a female dwarf and giant, the sheep family, who pulled out their bones, and games and drinking booths. And then on a waste piece of ground, surrounded by grey cottages, the Breton bagpipes played a quick, monotonous air belonging to bygone days ; some couples in old-fashioned dress danced to this venerable music ; men and women took each other by the hand and rushed along with the wind, as though they had gone mad, in a long, frenzied file. This was a bit of old Brittany, introducing a note of

barbarism, even heard by the gates of Brest, into the midst of the racket of the fair.

Yves and I tried at first to quiet the three sailors, and make them sit down.

Then it tickled our fancy to find ourselves lecturing them.

"After all," said I to Yves, "we have just been as bad ourselves."

"No doubt of that," responded he emphatically.

So we contented ourselves with stretching out our arms between the iron uprights, in order to keep the men from falling out.

The roads and villages were thronged with people returning from this *pardon*, who all gaped with astonishment, as our mad crew drove past with the three sailors dancing on the top of the vehicle.

The brilliant June invested Brittany with charm and life ; a soft warm breeze played under the grey sky ; the tall grass was full of pink flowers, and the emerald green trees covered with chafers.

The three sailors never ceased dancing and singing, while the inside passengers took up the refrain at the end of each couplet :

" He sailed with the wind behind him,  
But he'll tack when he's coming back."

It shook the omnibus windows, and this same tune, repeated for the whole six miles, was a French air of great antiquity, very old, yet always young, so fresh and enticing in its gaiety, that after a minute or two, we found ourselves joining in the chorus.

How fair and young and verdant Brittany looks under this June sunshine !

When we poor sea-faring folk come across the spring in

this way, we enjoy it more than others on account of the sequestered life we lead in our wooden cloisters. It was eight years since Yves had seen a Breton spring, and we had both grown weary of winter and the continual summer which shines on the great blue ocean in other climes: we felt intoxicated by this meadow herbage, the balmy scents, and the indescribable charm of June.

There are still some bright days to live for, some bewitching hours when we feel young and forget all beside. Then away with melancholy brooding and the morbid fancies of depressing poets! It does us good to fly along, with the wind full on our chests, in company with the lightest-hearted specimens of the populace. The true pleasures of life are youth and health, with the simple joys of good animal spirits, and sailors' songs!

On we went, rushing from one side of the road to the other amidst the concourse of people, between the high hawthorns forming two green hedges, and under a thick canopy of foliage.

Brest soon came in sight, with its imposing air of solemnity, its great granite ramparts, and lofty grey walls, where grasses and red foxgloves were growing too. The gloomy city seemed quite transported with delight by this rare summer's day and a clear warm evening; it was full of noise and movement, white caps were wandering to and fro, and sailors singing.

#### LIII.

*July 5, 1881.*

*At sea.* We are on our way back from the Channel. The *Sèvre* is quietly making her way in a dense fog, giving every minute a whistle which echoes like a cry of distress under the damp shroud by which we are enveloped. Around us

lie the grey solitudes of the sea, and we feel it, though we do not see them. We seem to be bearing along with us trails of darkness, and we long to pierce them, oppressed by being thus closed in for hours ; we feel ourselves enveloped by an enormous boundless curtain, as though we might sail on, league after league, without seeing anything, all in this same wan grey watery atmosphere. There is the same slow, gentle, monotonous, patient, exasperating swell on the waters, rising like the great burnished shining backs of animals, shoving you up with their shoulders, and then allowing you to drop down again.

Suddenly towards evening it clears, and a black object starts up unexpectedly before us like a lofty phantom rising from the sea : “*Ar Men Du !*” (the Black Rocks) says our old Breton pilot.

At the same moment, the veil is suddenly rent. Ushant comes into sight ; all its dark rocks and shoals standing out in dark grey, beaten by lofty sheaves of snowy foam, under a sky that looks as heavy as a vault of lead.

We have only just time to retrace our steps, and the *Sèvre* turns her head to make for Brest, no longer whistling, but speeding forward in hopes of getting into harbour. Then the curtain slowly falls and closes round us. Nothing more is to be seen, night comes on, and we have to put out to sea again.

Three days pass thus, and the fog never lifts. Our eyes grow weary with trying to pierce it.

This is my last voyage on the *Sèvre*, for I am to leave her as soon as we get back to Brest. Yves, with his Breton superstition, sees something unnatural in this fog prevailing in the height of summer, as if to hinder my departure.

He regards it as a warning, and a sign of ill omen.

BREST, *July 9th, 1881.*

Yet here we are after all, and this is my last watch on board ; I am leaving the ship to-morrow.

Here we lie, right within the harbour of Brest, where our *Sèvre* returns from time to time to lie at anchor between two high walls. Above us rise tall gloomy-looking piles of building ; we are surrounded by layers of primitive rock, from which rise ramparts and walks for the patrol, heavy erections of granite, all looking damp and dismal. I know all these things by heart.

It is July, and so a few foxgloves and tufts of catchfly are springing here and there from the grey stones. These red flowers are the only signs of summer in this sunless Brest.

I am half glad to be going. I always feel a sort of gloomy depression, after all, in Brittany ; I am conscious of it now, and when I think of the new unknown sensations awaiting me, I feel as if I were about to awake from a sort of night. Where shall I be sent ? Who knows ? What will be the name of that corner of the globe where I shall have to acclimatise myself next ? Doubtless some sunny land where I shall become another creature with new senses, and forget, alas ! the things loved elsewhere.

Yet it grieves me to leave my poor Yves and my little Pierre.

Poor Yves, who has often required to be treated like a spoilt child, is lavishing countless and almost childish attentions upon me now that I am about to leave, not knowing how to demonstrate all his affection. Such behaviour is all the more gratifying, because it is unusual with him.

Things have not always gone smoothly with us during the time we have been spending together in daily fraternal intimacy. Unfortunately he has not yet lost his title to be

called undisciplined and intractable, still he is improving, and if I could have kept him with me, I might have saved him.

After dinner, we went on deck for our usual evening walk.

I said for the last time : "Yves, make me a cigarette."

Then we began our regular hundred paces up and down the planks of this *Sèvre*, where we knew by heart every tiny hole in which the water gathered, every cleat on which our foot might catch, every ring over which we might stumble.

The sky remained veiled during this, our last walk, the moon was misty, and the air damp. In the distance, on the side towards Recouvrance, we could hear the sailors' never-ending songs.

We chatted about many things. I gave Yves a good deal of advice ; he was quite submissive, made me many promises in return, and it was late before he left me to go and sleep in his hammock.

Next day found me at the station by noon, with my boxes only just made up, and my calls left unpaid. Yves and my brother officers had come with me ; I grasped them all by the hand, I believe I even embraced them, and then I found myself off.

Shortly before nightfall I reached Toulven, where I had planned to stop for two hours in order to take leave of my friends.

How green and flowery this Toulven looked, this fresh shady district, the most charming part of Brittany ?

They were waiting for me to cut little Pierre's hair. I had never thought of such a task being entrusted to me, but they said "I was the only person who could make him keep still." They had sent for the barber from Toulven the week before, but little Pierre had danced and wriggled about so much that

the scissors had begun their work by cutting his little ears, so it had to be given up. I tried my hand, however, to please them, though I felt strongly inclined to laugh.

When the operation was over, the fancy took me to keep one of the little brown locks I had been cutting off, and I carried it away with me, much surprised to find myself caring for it.

## LIV.

ON BOARD THE "SEVRE", LISBON, *August 1, 1881.*

"DEAR BROTHER,—I am writing you a few lines on the same day on which I receive your letter. I am answering it in great haste during the breakfast-hour, from the main-mast rigging.

"We put into Lisbon last night. Dear brother, we have had very stormy weather this time, and lost our stay-sails, mizzen-sail, and whale-boat. I must also tell you that in the tremendously heavy sea, my bag and chest were swept overboard, and I lost everything, amounting to nearly a hundred francs.

"You asked me how I spent my Sunday a fortnight ago. Well, my dear brother, I stayed quietly on board and finished reading *Le Capitaine Fracasse*. The only time I have been ashore since you left was last Sunday, and I felt no anxiety, mainly because I had sent my month's pay home first; I received sixty-nine francs, and sent sixty-five to my wife.

"I have heard from Toulven, and they are all well. Little Pierre is very lively, and can run capitally now. He is just a little naughty now and then, when he puts on *his little gull's face*, like me, you know; by what my wife writes in her letter, he knocks down everything in the house. The walls of our cottage are already more than six feet high. I

shall be very glad when it is quite finished, and above all, to see you installed in your little room.

“ Dear brother, you tell me I must think of you often ; I assure you I do so every hour of the day, and often several times in the hour. Besides, you will understand that I have no one to talk to of an evening now, and my tobacco-pouch is often empty.

“ I cannot tell you which day we shall sail, but please write to me at Oran. They say we shall be paid at Oran, so that we may land and buy tobacco.

“ I must now bid you good-bye, dear brother, only adding my best love.—Your attached brother, ever yours,

“ YVES KERMADEC.”

“ P.S.—If I have plenty of money when we get to Oran, I shall lay in plenty of tobacco, and some especially for you, like that Turkish tobacco which you are so fond of smoking.

“ The steward gave me a table-napkin for you, the last you had used. I washed it out and tore it a little in doing so.

“ As to the book you gave me for making entries in, it got completely crushed by the storm, so I have had to give up writing.—Much love to you again, my dear brother, from

“ YVES KERMADEC.”

“ All on board goes on just as usual, and the captain has not left off fussing about the scouring of the deck.

“ There has been a grand dispute between him and the lieutenant, about those *royals* again, do you remember ? But they made it up again pretty soon.

“ I must also tell you that within seven or eight months I expect to become once more a father, but I am not over-delighted, for it is rather too soon.

“ YOUR BROTHER YVES.”

These little notes from Yves find me in the East, and

remind me, by their simplicity, of the fragrance of his native Brittany.

My impressions of it seem growing fainter. Already they begin to float before me like visions in a dream; I can see the familiar shoals and lights on the coast, the point of Finisterre with its grand forbidding rocks, our dangerous approaches to Ushant on winter evenings, and the west wind driving beneath a clouded sky as the December night closes round us. It seems a vision of a black country as I look back on it now.

That poor little cottage at Toulven was a humble abode, and very much buried on the edge of that Breton lane. But the country was a land of beech trees, grey rocks, moss and lichens; ancient granite chapels and tall grass full of pink flowers. Here I see nothing but sand and white minarets under a deep blue sky, and the sun, that eternal magician, casting its glamour over all.

BREST, *September 10, 1881.*

“ **MY DEAR KIND BROTHER**,—I have to tell you that our *Sèvre* is disarmed; we handed her over to the Board yesterday, and, 'pon my honour, I can't say I'm sorry.

“ I expect to stay some time on shore in this quarter; and so, as our cottage is not nearly finished yet (as you may suppose), my wife has come to settle near me at Brest till it is ready for us. You will approve of this, dear brother, I think. This time we have taken lodgings almost in the country, on the side of Recouvrance towards Pontaniou.

“ Dear brother, I must tell you that little Pierre has been seriously ill of colic, brought on by eating too many bilberries in the woods the last Sunday we were at Toulven, but he is all right again now. He is growing such a darling, and I play with him for hours. In the evenings, we three

go out walking together ; we never go out separately, and if one returns home, the other two come back as well.

“ Dear brother, if you could but be here in Brest, nothing would be wanting to my happiness ; you would see how things are now, and be quite satisfied, for I have never settled down so quietly before.

“ I should like to be sailing with you again, my kind brother, if I could only find some boat on its way out to the Levant which would take me to join you ; and yet I should be only too glad for my present life to continue, I promise you, but that can never be, for I am too happy.

“ I must only add my best love, and little Pierre sends you his respects. My wife and all our family at Toulven beg to be remembered. They are longing to see you again, and I am sure I am.—Your brother,                   “ YVES KERMADEC.”

## LV.

TOULVEN, *October 1881.*

HERE again in this pale Brittany, under its autumn sun ! Here are the old Breton lanes, the beeches and heather. I fancied I had bidden this country a long farewell, and it makes me melancholy to see it again. My return has been sudden and unexpected, as a sailor's movements often are.

It is a fine October day, the sun is warm, and a thin white mist hangs over the landscape like a veil. There is the great calm peculiar to the last fine days of the year ; already there is a smell of damp and fallen leaves, and a feeling of autumn in the air. I find myself back in the familiar woods of Trémeulé, on the eminence which commands the whole of the Toulven district. Down below lies the pool of water, motionless under the vapour which hovers over it, and all the distant

horizons are wooded, as they must have been in the ancient days of Gaul.

My Breton friends, my brother Yves and his little Pierre, are sitting by my side among the myriads of tiny heather blossoms.

I seem half to belong to Toulven by this time. Only a few years back it was quite unknown to me, and Yves, though I certainly called him brother, was comparatively indifferent to me. Our lives change their aspect; many things happen, the scene shifts and becomes transformed.

There is such an expanse of heather that it seems to form a pink carpet in the distance. The lingering scabious is still in blossom, surmounting its long slender stalk; and the first autumn gales have strewn the ground with dead leaves.

What Yves had written was quite true; he had become wonderfully steady. He had just been appointed to one of the vessels lying in Brest harbour, and this seemed likely to ensure his remaining in his own country for the next two years. His wife, Marie, had settled near him in the suburb of Recouvrance, waiting for the cottage at Toulven, whose thick, substantial, old-fashioned walls were slowly rising from the ground. She had hailed my unexpected arrival as a boon from heaven, for my presence near them at Brest tended to reassure her greatly.

To think of Yves having become so steady, and all at once too, without any one knowing what had occurred to change him; it was almost hard to credit it! Marie confirmed the joyful fact, but rather timidly; she spoke of it as a fugitive, unstable thing, which we tremble to destroy merely by mentioning.

One day the brandy demon again passed their way. Yves

returned home with that terrible restless expression of which Marie was always so frightened.

It was one Sunday in October. He had come from his ship, and said they had put him in irons, but that he had made his escape because it was so unjust. He seemed very much exasperated ; his blue jersey was torn, and his shirt wide open.

She tried to speak to him gently and soothe him. It was a particularly fine Sunday—one of those rare days in late autumn which breathe a calm, sweet melancholy, and seem like a last resting-place for the sun before winter arrives. She had put on her beautiful dress and embroidered collar, and dressed little Pierre in his best clothes, supposing they should all be going out together for a walk in the beautiful bright sunshine. Couples belonging to the working-classes kept passing along the street in their Sunday best, on their way out to the roads and woods, as if it had been spring.

Nothing, however, would avail ; Yves had given vent to the horrid brutal phrase she knew too well, “I am going to join my friends.” It was all over then !

Her poor head was quite bewildered, and in her distress she had recourse to extreme measures. While he was gazing down the street, she turned the key in the door twice, and then hid it in her bodice. He understood, however, what she had been doing, and began to say, as he let his head droop and glared with his fishy eyes—

“Open it ! Open ! I say ! Do you hear me tell you to open ?”

Then he tried to shake the hinges off the door, he might easily have battered it down, but something seemed still to restrain his hand. Besides, he intended his wife, who had locked it, to come and open.

He paced up and down the room like a wild beast, repeating, "Open ! Do you hear ? I tell you to open !"

The joyous Sunday sounds rose from the street. Women in large caps were passing by on the arm of their husbands or lovers, and the splendid autumn sun shed its peaceful radiance over them all.

He kept stamping his foot and repeating in a low tone, "Open ! Open, I say !" This was the first time she had ever tried to detain him by force ; she could see it was not going to answer, and she got terribly frightened. She did not even look at him, but threw herself on her knees in a corner, and kept repeating prayers aloud and at a great rate, as if she had lost her senses. She felt as though some awful crisis were at hand, that something worse than all that had gone before was about to happen. Little Pierre stood by with his large eyes wide open, frightened, too, he knew not why.

"You will not open ? No ? Well, then, I shall tear it off the hinges ! You shall see !"

The whole floor shook, and then came a dull, horrid thud. Yves had fallen full length to the ground. The piece of the door of which he had seized hold had come away in his hand, making him fall back and upset his son, whose little head had been knocked against one of the fire-irons.

The scene suddenly changed. Marie's prayers had ceased ; she had risen, with fierce dilated eyes, to take her little Pierre from Yves' hands as he tried to lift him up. The child had fallen without a cry, terrified at his father hurting him. The blood was streaming down his forehead, yet he said not a word. Marie clasped him to her breast, while she took the key from her bodice, and, unlocking the door with one hand, flung it wide open. Yves stood looking at her, frightened in his turn ; she had drawn back, and was crying—

"Go away with you ! Go ! Go !"

And now poor Yves hesitated to pass out. He was trying to make out what all this meant. He no longer wished to pass through the door thus opened for him ; he had a vague feeling that there was some fatality attached to crossing this threshold. And then he perceived the blood on his son's face and tiny collar, and tried to grasp what all this meant, and draw nearer. He passed his hand over his brow, conscious that he was intoxicated, and making a great effort to clear his brain and learn what had happened. Alas ! it was impossible : he could understand nothing now, except that his friends and more drink were waiting for him down the street.

His wife still kept repeating, as she clasped the child to her breast, " Go away ! Go ! "

Then he turned on his heel, gained the staircase, and was gone.

## LVI.

" **W**HAT, is that you, Kermadec ? "

" Yes, Monsieur Kerjean."

" Off from your ship, too, I bet ? "

" Yes, Monsieur Kerjean."

It was easy enough to see as much from his dress.

" Why, I thought you were married, Yves ? Some one at Paimpol—big Lisbatz, I believe—told me you had become a family man."

Yves shrugged his shoulders recklessly, and said—

" If you were wanting a hand now, Monsieur Kerjean, I would not mind sailing with you."

This was not the first time Captain Kerjean had enrolled a deserter. He understood his business, and knew both how

to tempt and how to treat his men. His ship, the *Belle Rose*, sailed under the American flag, and was leaving for California next day. Yves was just the man he wanted, and would be quite an acquisition to the sort of crew he had.

The pair went apart to frame, under their breath, a treaty of alliance.

This scene was taking place in the merchant harbour on the morning of the second day after Yves had left home.

He had crept along the walls of Recouvrance the evening before, to try to learn something about his little Pierre, and had caught a distant glimpse of him at the window, with a bandage across his forehead, watching the people pass. Then, in the hazy condition in which he still continued from the effects of drink, he felt reassured, and retraced his steps, going "to join his friends."

That morning he found himself awake by daybreak under a shed on the quay where his "friends" had laid him. This time he had really come to himself. The beautiful October weather was still there, the air was fresh and clear; everything looked just as usual, as though nothing had happened, and his first thoughts reverted with emotion to his son and Marie, and he was about to rise and go to ask their forgiveness. In another moment, however, he remembered everything, and told himself it was all over now, and he was lost for ever.

What, return to them again, now? Oh, no, he never could, he had disgraced himself!

Besides, he had run away from his ship after being put into irons, and had gone off on the spree for three days, conduct for which he could never atone. What! Again make the resolution he had so often broken, give the same promise, say the same penitent words? No, indeed, and he gave a bitter smile of pity and disgust.

His wife had said “go away!” he could remember that, and her look of detestation as she showed him the door. He might have deserved it over and over again, still he was accustomed to be her lord and master, and could never brook this at her hands. She had sent him away; very well, he would go where his fate led him, and never see her again.

He took this relapse all the more to heart, because it came after such a happy period of honest tranquillity, during which glimpses of better things had been vouchsafed him; hence the revival of his misery seemed fatal and decisive. At this moment he saw that he was covered with dust, mud, and filth of all sorts, and he began to brush himself down and toss back his head, while a hard, disdainful expression gradually over-spread his face.

To have knocked down his own son, and cut open his sweet little forehead! He looked on himself as an absolutely repulsive wretch.

He smashed up between his hands the boards of a box lying close by, and after glancing instinctively to make sure he was alone, swore hideous nautical oaths at himself in a low voice, with a derisive laugh.

He was standing erect now, with a haughty rebellious look upon his face.

He would desert! If only some vessel would bear him off then and there! He could surely find one on the quays; there were many in port that day. Yes, he would desert, sacrifice everything, and never let himself be seen again!

He had made up his mind, and walked on towards the shipping, with an erect carriage, Breton obstinacy transpiring through his half-closed eyes and on his frowning brow.

He was saying to himself: “I am a good-for-nothing, I know, I knew it, and they had better have left me alone. I have tried my best, but it is my nature and not my own fault.”

Possibly he was right : *it was not his own fault.* He was not his own master at that moment, but swayed by remote mysterious influences he had inherited with his blood : he was suffering from the laws of transmission which prevail throughout a family, or even throughout a race.

## LVII.

By two o'clock that same day, after Yves had concluded his bargain, bought a merchant sailor's suit, and changed his clothes secretly in a tavern on the quay, he went on board the *Belle Rose*.

He walked all round the boat, which was badly kept and looked rough and barbarous, but seemed strong and supple, well adapted for speed and for facing the dangers of the ocean.

After the men-of-war, she looked small, short, and, above all, empty ; there was scarcely any one on board, and she had a deserted look ; even when at her moorings this semi-solitude was very striking. Three or four fellows who looked half pirates were lounging about the deck ; these formed the entire crew, and were about to become Yves' only companions, it might be for years.

They began by staring at one another instead of speaking.

The same fine, warm, calm weather continued throughout the day, the melancholy Indian summer which conduces to meditation. Yves was able to contemplate quietly the irrevocable nature of his decision.

The men showed him his locker, but he had scarcely anything to put in it. He washed himself in cold spring water, and arranged his new costume to the best advantage. It was no longer the State uniform, which had often seemed to weigh

him down ; he felt himself free; as though death had released him from every shackle. He tried to revel in his independence.

The *Belle Rose* was to sail with the tide next morning. Yves looked forward to the open sea, and the life he was about to resume under the new shape he had so often coveted. For years he had been haunted by this idea of deserting, and now it had been carried out. Some of his self-respect seemed to return when he had taken this decisive step, and knew himself beyond the reach of the law ; he would not feel ashamed to show himself to his wife now that he was a deserter, and he told himself that he should have courage to go back again that evening before sailing, that he might at least take her what money he had received.

Now and again, when his little Pierre's face rose before him, he felt a dreadful pang seize him ; this silent, desolate vessel seemed like a bier on which he had chosen to bury himself alive, and he felt ready to choke ; a flood of tears rose to his eyes, but his iron will forced them back ; he turned his thoughts to other things, and began to talk to his new friends. Their conversation turned upon the way to work a vessel with so small a crew, or the management of the great pulleys which had been everywhere multiplied as a substitute for human arms, and, in his opinion, made the tackling of the *Belle Rose* too heavy.

Towards night, when the sun had gone down, he went to Recouvrance, and stole noiselessly up stairs to his door. His child was all alone and asleep. He bent over the wicker basket, which looked like the nest of some tiny bird, and laid his mouth softly to the boy's to inhale his sweet breath once more. Then he sat down by his side, resting patiently, so that he might appear quite calm when his wife came in.

Marie had followed him upstairs, trembling ; she had seen him enter.

She had had two days in which to contemplate every aspect her misfortune might assume.

She would not go and question the other sailors, as poor wives often did when their husbands went off on the spree, to know whether Yves had returned to his ship. She had no tidings of him, but waited and kept herself prepared for anything.

Perhaps he would not return at all ; she was prepared even for that, and surprised to find herself contemplating it so calmly. She had resolved what to do in such a case ; she would not return to Toulven for fear of seeing that little cottage building, and hearing her husband's name cursed each day by the parents who would take her back again. There lived an old woman down in Goëlo who bore a strong resemblance to Yves, and whose features seemed softer to her now. Hers was the door at which she meant to knock ; *she* would speak kindly of him, for she was his mother. They could talk gently of the absent one ; the two desolate women might draw together and bring up little Pierre, doing their best, at least, to prevent *him* from going to sea.

Besides, she felt that, supposing the deserter should ever wish to return to his family in the course of years, it would be at this retired spot, Plouherzel, that he would make his appearance.

She had had a strange dream, the night before, about Yves' return ; it lay very far off in the future, when she herself had grown quite old. Yves had come to her one evening, in the cottage at Plouherzel, looking much changed, old, and miserable, and asked her forgiveness. Behind him walked his brothers, Goulven and Gildas, and *another Yves*, overtopping them all in stature, whose hair was white, with

long fringes of seaweed hanging about his legs. The aged mother met them with her harsh countenance, and asked, in a grim voice, "What are all these doing here? My husband must have died at sea more than sixty years since—Goulven is in America—Gildas lies in the cemetery. What are they doing here?" Then Marie started up in terror, and awoke to find that she had been in the company of ghosts.

Here was Yves back again, however, alive and still young; she had recognised his tall figure and brisk step along the dark street. All her courage and her plans deserted her at the idea of seeing him again and learning her fate. She trembled more and more as she climbed the stairs. Perhaps, after all, he might only have passed these two days on board ship and be coming home as usual, and then everything might take its usual course. She stopped for a moment halfway, to offer up a hasty petition that this might be the case.

When she opened the door she found him in the room, seated by the cradle, gazing on his sleeping child.

The poor little fellow lay fast asleep, with the bandage still round his forehead over the wound.

As soon as the pale wife entered, her heart palpitating in painful throbs, she saw at once that Yves was not in liquor now; he had looked up, and his eyes were unclouded, though he dropped them instantly, and still bent over his boy.

"Was he much hurt?" asked he, in a half whisper, with a calm deliberation, which was both startling and alarming.

"No; I fetched the doctor to dress the wound. He said it would leave no scar. He never cried."

They stood there, silently facing each other, he still seated by the little cradle, while she stood, pale and trembling. They were not angry with one another now; perhaps

they still loved each other, but something irreparable had happened, and it was too late now. She looked at his black jersey and cloth cap ; she had never seen him so dressed before, what did it mean ? And then this bundle lying on the ground by his side, out of which a bit of blue cloth was peeping ? It must contain his sailor's clothes, which he had cast off for ever, as though the real Yves were dead.

She ventured to ask : " Did you return to your ship the other day ? "

" No ! "

Another silence ensued, and her anguish increased.

" Have you been away for three days, Yves ? "

" Yes ! "

She did not venture to speak again, fearing to grasp this terrible business, and longing to make the most even of these cruel moments of uncertainty, because he was still with her, perhaps for the last time.

At length the poignant question escaped her lips : " What do you mean to do ? "

The reply came with the simple tranquillity of an implacable resolution, as he half whispered the one word : " Desert ! "

Desert the service ! Ah, yes, that was what had flashed across her mind a few seconds ago, when she saw his altered dress and the little bundle of clothes carefully made up in a handkerchief.

The horror of the word had made her recoil, and she threw back her hands to steady herself against the wall, while something seemed to rise in her throat and choke her. Yves a deserter ! Lost for ever ! Again there flitted before her eyes the image of his brother Goulven and those distant seas from which mariners never return. And there she stood, stunned, as though she felt her own impotence against this will which bore her down.

Yves had begun to talk to her in a very gentle voice, pointing with gloomy composure to the little bundle he had brought.

“Look here, my poor Marie, to-morrow, when my vessel has sailed, you must send this back. Who knows, if they were to catch me——, it is always a more serious matter if you make off with State property ! And here is the earnest-money I have received to start with——. You must go back to Toulven. Oh ! I shall send you money from the other side of the world, all that I earn, I shall not want much myself now, you see. We shall never meet again, but you will not be very unhappy, so long as I live.”

She longed to throw her arms round him, detain him by force, struggle against his going, cling to him, and even let him drag her downstairs and into the street. Yet she was restrained, partly by a perception that it would be quite fruitless, and partly by a feeling of self-respect in the presence of her sleeping child. So there she stood, without moving a muscle, still leaning against the wall.

He had laid some large pieces of silver on the table beside him, amounting to two hundred francs. This was what was left of his earnest-money after buying his clothes and a few necessaries. He was gazing on her now with a soft, pensive expression, and wiping away with his woollen cuff the tears that trickled down his cheeks.

Yet this was all he had to say to her. And this was their last moment together ; it was all over now.

He bent once more over his child, then raised himself up, and prepared to go.

## LVIII.

THE Coral Sea ! At the very antipodes of our Old World ! We are surrounded by the infinite blue ; it forms a perfect circle round our vessel as she sails gently on, while it sparkles and glitters under the cloudless sun.

Yves is by himself at a great height aloft, rocked in the air by some faint breeze ; he is gaining his post in the tops.

Thence he surveys the boundless circle, though he is not looking at it ; he is almost wearied of space and sunshine. His lack-lustre eyes rest indifferently on any point, for everything looks the same, wherever he may turn.

Everything looks alike : this is the grand blind unconscious splendour of things which men believe created for their advantage. The surface of these waters is swept by life-giving breezes which no one inhales ; light and heat are lavished on them ; all the springs of life are poured forth on these silent, solitary waters, enduing them with a singular brilliancy.

The glassy surface of the ocean reflects eternal sunshine : the burning noontide rays fall on this boundless blue desert of waters with prodigal splendour.

At this moment, Yves fancies he can discern something less blue in the distance, and begins to concentrate on it the gaze that has just been wandering aimlessly over this calm monotonous brilliancy ; the sea must be breaking there on some white coral reefs, unknown islands close to the surface, which are not marked on any chart.

How far he feels from Brittany, and those green Toulven lanes, and his son !

He has emerged from his reverie now, and strains his eyes,

shading them with his hand, to descry the distant sheet which grows whiter and whiter.

He does not look like a deserter, for he still wears the sailor's blue collar.

He has caught sight now of the breakers and the coral, and leaning forward, shouts down to those below : "Reefs to port!"

No, Yves has not deserted, for here he is sailing on the *Primauguet*, a man of war.

He has not deserted, for he is still with me, and when he gives warning of our approach to these reefs, I climb up to the top, to reconnoitre them with him.

On that sad day when he thought of leaving us at Brest, I had seen him pass as a deserter with his sailor's clothes made up in that handkerchief, and I followed him out to Recouvrance. I had allowed Marie to go upstairs first, then I followed ; and when he came out he had found me standing outside the door, barring his passage with outstretched arms, as I had done once before at Toulven. This time, however, it was not a childish caprice with which I had to contend, but a struggle for life and death.

Very long and hard it was, and I was wellnigh losing courage, and abandoning him to the gloomy fate to which he was hastening. But the struggle had terminated abruptly in a flood of wholesome tears, which had been ready to flow for the last few days, but kept back by his iron will. Then we set upon his knee little Pierre, who had just wakened from his sleep, and little Pierre bore him no malice, but flung his arms straightway round his father's neck. And Yves had ended by saying—

" Well, brother, I will do whatever you tell me. Not that it matters much now, for you must see it is all over——"

It was a serious business indeed, and I myself hardly knew

what to do. There was a sort of rebellion in having secretly left the ship after they had put him in irons, and then to have stayed away three days! After I had made the pair kiss each other, I felt ready to say, "Desert both of you, all three of you, dear friends, for it is too late now to do anything else. Let Yves sail away on his *Belle Rose*, and Marie can join him in America."

Still, it would be so terrible to leave Brittany for ever, and the cottage at Toulven, and the poor old parents!

So, though I trembled a little at assuming the responsibility, I determined on an opposite course—to restore the earnest-money that very night, deliver Yves from the hands of this Captain Kerjean, and, as soon as the arsenal gates opened next morning, hand him over to maritime justice. Some painful days ensued, in which I could but work and wait. Finally, however, by a stretch of leniency, the matter had been settled thus: Yves was to spend one month in irons, and be suspended for six from his office of quartermaster, returning to the pay of an ordinary seaman.

And this is how my poor Yves, who had sailed with me on board the *Primauguet*, found himself back in the tops again, discharging the hard duties of former days.

We stood together on the mizzen yard, leaning forward into space, with one hand screening our eyes, while the other clung to the ropes, as we gazed out over this brilliant blue waste of waters, at the ever-whitening breakers; their constant roar rose like the faint sound of a church organ in the midst of this silent sea.

This was actually a great coral island never noticed by any previous navigator. It had risen slowly from the depths beneath; for ages and ages it had been patiently forming its stone branches; as yet it was nothing but an immense circle of white foam, giving forth a living sound—a sort of mys-

terious, never-ending roar in the midst of this quiet ocean.

The blue waste lay even, calm, deep, and infinite on every other side, so we could continue our course.

"You have gained your *double*, brother," said I to Yves.

By this I meant a double ration of wine at the crew's mess. This is always the reward on board ship to the sailor who has been the first to signal land or any danger, or to any one catching a rat without setting a trap, or to the man who outvies his fellows in adjusting his dress for the Sunday inspection.

Yves smiled, as if my words had brought back some sad recollection.

"You know that I have nothing to do with wine now. It does not signify, though; I may as well have it served out; my mess companions will be ready enough to drink it."

It was a fact that since the time he had knocked his little Pierre's head against the fire-irons, he had touched nothing but water. He had sworn this over the precious head he had injured, and it was the first solemn oath of his life.

We were chatting there together, in the sweet fresh air, amongst these slightly swollen sails which gleamed so white in this sunshine, when the sound of a whistle was heard from below, a very imperative whistle, which meant in nautical language: "The mizzen-topman is wanted; let him come down at once!"

The mizzen-topman was Yves, and down he went to see why he was wanted. The first lieutenant had sent for him, and I knew the reason why.

All sailors become rather confused as to seasons and months and days in these tranquil remote seas we were now navigating; the monotony of things makes them forget the lapse of time.

Winter and summer, indeed, become but names ; seasons cease to exist where the climate is so different. There is nothing in nature to mark them ; one sees the boundless expanse of water and the self-same planks, and there is nothing to grow green at the return of spring.

Yves had easily resumed his former duties and habits, his life in these tops, scantily clad, in the sun and wind, with his knife and cord. He had ceased to count the days, because they were all alike, marked only by the recurrence of the watches, and alternations of a sun that was always hot, with nights that were always clear. He had accepted this period of exile without computing it.

Nevertheless, his six months of punishment expired that very day, and the officer in command was ordering him to resume his red stripes, his silver whistle, and his authority as quarter-master. He gave the order kindly, and shook him by the hand ; for Yves had been exemplary in his conduct and courage throughout his time of probation, and a more faithful look-out had never been kept.

Yves returned to me with a radiant face : " Why did you not tell me this was the day ? "

He had been promised that if he continued to behave as he had done, even the fact of his having been punished would soon be forgotten. The oath he had sworn over his little Pierre's wounded head, at the close of that terrible evening, had certainly succeeded beyond his hopes.

## LIX.

THE afternoon of that very day found Yves in my cabin, hastening to restore the red stripes to his sleeves before night came. He looked as droll as ever, with the same dare-devil toss of his head, even when he was busy sewing.

His poor suit had certainly seen its best days by this time. He had not been in funds when he left Brest, owing to this reduction in his pay ; and he did not care to forestall any of the money due to him in order to make many purchases. Still his clothes are so well brushed, and the tiny patches on the elbows and cuffs so beautifully put on, that they may easily pass muster ; these new stripes, too, freshen them up a good deal. Besides, Yves looks well in any clothes ; and as uniforms are very seldom required at sea, they may manage to last out this cruise. As to money, he has none ; he has almost forgotten its use and value, like many another sailor, for he has assigned his pay, and decorations, and everything he may get, to his wife at Brest.

Night comes, and his task is completed ; he wraps his clothes up carefully, and then sweeps up any ends of thread that may have fallen on the floor. After making particular enquiries as to the day and the month, he next lights a candle and sits down to write.

“ *AT SEA, ON BOARD THE Primauguet,*  
*April 23, 1882.* ”

“ DEAR WIFE,—I am writing you a few lines to-day in M. Pierre’s cabin, in order to have them ready. I shall post them next month, when we touch at the Sandwich Islands—a place that I am sure you know nothing about.

“ I want to tell you that I have got my stripes back again to-day, and you may set your mind at ease, for I am not going to lose them again ; they are *firmly stitched* this time.

“ Dear wife, this shows me that just six months have elapsed since we parted, and there is no chance of our meeting again just yet. I should be glad enough if I could run down to Toulven and give you a hand in getting our house into order, and not altogether on that account, you may be sure, but

mainly in order to spend a little while with you, and see our little Pierre running about. I shall want a long leave of two or three weeks at least, when we come back ; perhaps even three will not be enough, and I shall have to ask for four.

“ Dear Marie, I must tell you that I am very happy, especially as I am sailing these seas with M. Pierre, which was what I had been wanting to do for some time. We are having a beautiful cruise, and an economical one, too, for me, who have good reasons, as you know, for wanting to save all the money I can. Perhaps before we land I may be proposed as *second*, for I get on capitally with all the officers.

“ I must also tell you that the flying-fish—— ”

Crack ! A whistle sounds above : “ All hands on deck ! ”

The topsails are to be reefed. Yves darts off, and no one ever heard the end of his story about the fish.

He has retained his childish manner in communicating with his wife. But in his intercourse with me there is a great alteration visible, and he has become another Yves, a more complex and refined character.

The night which followed was clear and delicious. We were gently sailing before a soft breeze in the Coral Sea, advancing cautiously for fear of coming across any more of these white islands, and straining our ears to catch the sound of breakers on a reef.

The middle watch passed in keeping a look-out amidst the strange calm of these southern waters.

Everything looked a deep blue-green ; the moon was high in the heavens at first, casting little dancing reflections on the waters, as though mysterious hands were silently moving innumerable little mirrors to and fro over this vast, desolate expanse.

One half hour after another glided peacefully by, the

breeze continuing steady and slightly inflating the sails. The men of the watch were lying on deck in canvas suits, sleeping in rows, all turned on the same side, and packed together like a set of white mummies.

At each half hour they started at the vibration of the bell, and then two voices rose from the forepart of the vessel, chanting slowly, one after the other, in a sort of rhythm : "Keep a look-out a-head, starboard ! Keep a look-out ahead, port !" This noise is startling in the midst of the prevailing silence ; then the vibrations of voices and bell both cease, and nothing more is heard.

The moon is slowly sinking, and her blue light waning ; she is nearing the ocean now, and sheds a long trail of light over its surface.

Then she grows yellower, and gives scarcely any light at all, like a lamp that is dying down.

Next she waxes larger and larger, growing to an immense orb, which turns red, loses its form, and vanishes in a most startling manner. All that can be seen now is a lurid, blood-red glare, too far diffused to be the moon, and distant objects seem to rise before it like gloomy shadows : colossal towers, crumbling mountains, and palaces appear.

A shadowy veil seems to rest on the senses, transporting you into the realms of fancy. Apocalyptic cities, lowering clouds of blood, and impending maledictions seem hovering in the air ; monstrous apparitions, chaotic destructions, the end of the world itself seems at hand. For an instant, mental slumber has sealed your senses, and a waking dream taken possession of you,—but it has soon fled. It was but a mirage ! It is over now, and the moon has vanished below the horizon. There is nothing left but the infinite ocean and the wandering vapours which herald the approaching dawn ; even these become invisible when the moon ceases to

shine behind them. The scene has melted into air, and the pure tranquillity of night again resumes its sway.

These visionary countries are far off indeed ; for here we are in the Coral Sea, on the other side of the globe, and there is nothing around us but the wide circle and the mirror-like expanse of water.

A helmsman has been to look at the time by the dial. He has to show his respect for the moon by entering the exact second at which she set in the great register always lying open, which is the ship's log-book.

Then he comes back again to say—

“ Captain, it is time to call the watch !”

So my four hours are over, and another officer will soon come to relieve me.

I issue orders for the gunner's mate and his men to call the watch, and then some of the men who have been lying on deck, like white mummies, start up and wake the rest, and down they all go together. Twenty voices are soon heard on the orlop deck below, singing one after another, as if it were a catch, a lively half mocking air to rouse the starboard men.

They thread their way in and out, stoop under the swinging hammocks, and shake the sleepers with their shoulders as they pass.

Then I give the inexorable word of command, “ Starboard watch on deck !”

Up they come, half naked ; some yawning, some stretching themselves, some stumbling. They fall into groups at their post, while a man with a lantern examines and counts them. The others, who have been sleeping on deck, will go below now and occupy the hammocks.

Yves, too, has come up with the starboard watch. I recognised his whistle, which I had not heard for a year ; and

then I recognise his voice, shouting his orders for the first time on the deck of the *Primauguet*.

Upon this I summon him officially by the title he has just regained—"Quartermaster!"

It is only to press his hand and give him a welcome before I turn in for the rest of the night.

## LX.

"HAUL the rope on board, Goulven!"

I had come in one of the *Primauguet's* boats to board a whaling vessel of suspicious appearance which carried no flag, and it was not easy to bring our boat alongside.

We were still in the southern ocean, on the windward side of the island of Tonga-Taboo. The *Primauguet* was anchored in a bay within the line of reefs, so as to get the shelter of the coral. The whaler, on the other hand, was riding almost in the open, as though preparing to take flight, and there was a heavy surge.

I had been despatched to reconnoitre the vessel.

"Haul it in, Goulven, haul it in!"

I raised my head to look at the man called Goulven, who was standing on the suspicious vessel holding the rope that had just been thrown me. The face and familiar expression startled me; he looked a second Yves, older, even more sun-burnt, and possibly more athletic than the man I knew, with harsher features, which bore the impress of greater sufferings, but with just the same eyes and expression, so that I felt as though I were gazing on his double.

I had sometimes fancied that we might fall in with Yves' brother, Goulven, on one of these whalers which we occasion-

ally found anchored here and there in these southern seas, and boarded if they looked suspicious.

I went up to him at once, never stopping to trouble myself about the captain—a huge American, with a head like a pirate's, and a long shaggy beard like a trail of seaweed. I stepped on the vessel as though it were conquered territory, quite regardless of etiquette.

“Is this you, Goulven Kermadec?”

I felt so sure it was that I held out my hand as I advanced. But he turned pale under his coat of tan, and shrank back, for he was frightened.

I could see the savage instinct that made him clench his fists and stiffen his muscles, as if to make a desperate resistance.

Poor Goulven! It was a great surprise to hear me mention his name, and to see my uniform and the six armed sailors who accompanied me. He thought I had come to recapture him in the name of French law, and, like Yves, the idea of any compulsion exasperated him.

It took only a minute to tame him; as soon as he learned that his *little brother* had become my brother, and was on the man-of-war yonder, he apologised for his terror with the same frank smile I knew so well in Yves.

It was a queer looking crew, and the ship itself had a piratical sort of air. She had been well knocked about by the waves during the three years she had been tossing in these surges of the Pacific without touching any civilised land, yet she was seaworthy still, and built for speed. All along her shrouds, from every footrope, hung whales' whiskers, looking like long black fringes, as though she had been sailing under water and got covered with tangled seaweeds.

The hold was full of oil and blubber from all the big fish

he had taken. This was worth a fortune, and the captain was intending soon to return to America, to his Californian port.

It was a mixed crew—consisting of two Frenchmen, two Americans, three Spaniards, one German, an Indian cabin-boy, and a Chinaman cook. There was also a Peruvian *chola* on board, only half clad like the men ; this was the captain's wife, and she was suckling an infant of two months, bred and born on the sea.

The family were quartered in the stern of the vessel, within oak walls as thick as ramparts, closed by doors lined with iron. There was a perfect arsenal of revolvers, life-preservers, and tomahawks inside. Every precaution had been taken ; in case of need they could hold out there against the whole crew.

All their papers, however, were perfectly correct. The reason they gave for not hoisting a flag was that they had none left ; the rats had eaten the last, and they showed me its tattered fragments by way of apology ; the red and white stripes were there, and the stars in the corner. There was nothing to complain of, it seemed all quite right.

Goulven asked me whether I knew Plouherzel ; and then I told him how I had spent a night under his aged mother's roof.

“ And don't you mean ever to go back again ? ” said I.

I could see that this was still a sore point with him.

“ It is too late to do that now. I should have to give myself up to Government and be punished ; and, besides, I have married out in California, and have two children at Sacramento.”

“ Will you come with me and see Yves ? ”

“ Come with you ? ” repeated he, in a faint dismal tone, as though utterly confounded by my proposition.

"Come with you? Don't you know that I am a deserter?"  
He looked and spoke so like Yves at that moment that it actually distressed me.

After all, I could understand his jealousy about his liberty and his feeling of alarm. I respected his fears of French territory, and the deck of a man-of-war amounts to the same thing; if he had stepped on board the *Primauguet*, the law would have allowed us to take him.

"Well, at any rate," said I, "should you like to see him?"

"Like to see him, my dear little Yves!"

"Very well, then I will bring him here. All I ask is, that when he comes, you will give him good advice. You understand what I mean, Goulven?"

Upon this he seized my hand and pressed it between both his own.

## LXI.

I HAD accepted an invitation from the captain of this whaler to dine with him next day. We had got on capitally together. His manners were certainly unconventional, but he was no commonplace fellow. And then, after all, it was my only means of bringing Yves to the ship.

I had half expected to find the whaler gone next morning, thinking she might spread her wings during the night like some wild bird. There she lay, however, still riding at anchor in the open sea, with the black fringes hanging from her shrouds, the sole object discernible on the great circle of waters, which lay calm and unruffled like a sheet of burnished silver.

The invitation had been given in earnest, and I was

expected. Our commander wished me, by way of precaution, to have my boatmen armed, and to keep them with me all the while. Nothing could have suited Yves better, and I took him with me as boatswain.

The captain received me in his cabin, in a fairly correct Yankee uniform ; the *chola* was quite transformed by a pink silk dress and magnificent necklace of pearls from the Pomotoo Islands ; I was forced to admire her beauty and the symmetry of her figure.

So here we were within the curious iron-bound walls. It was dark and gloomy enough inside ; but through the narrow, deep-set windows, one could catch glimpses of fairyland ; a milky-blue sea shining like turquoise, a distant island of a rainbow violet hue, and tiny orange clouds floating in a golden green sky.

On turning one's eyes from these open windows and beautiful effects of light, the low-roofed cabin looked all the more strange with its irregular form and massive rafters, and its store of revolvers, life-preservers, whips and thongs.

We dined on preserved meats from San Francisco, the delicious fruits of the island of Tonga-Taboo, and delicate little fish caught in these warm seas ; French wines, Peruvian *pisco*, and English liqueurs were also served.

The Chinaman who waited on us wore a violet silk dress and slippers with high paper heels. The *chola* sang us a Chilian *zamacueca*, and played an accompaniment on her *diguhela*, which sounded rather like the monotonous trot of a mule. The doors of their fortress stood wide open. Thanks to the presence of my sixteen armed men, there was a touching sense of security, and a peaceful intimacy prevailed throughout the vessel.

The men of the *Primauguet* were drinking and singing in the forepart of the vessel with the crew. There was an air

of festivity all around us. I could see Yves and Goulven in the distance, not drinking like the rest, but walking up and down and talking together. Goulven, who was the taller of the two, had flung his arm round his brother's shoulders, while Yves passed his round Goulven's waist, and thus they paced the deck, conversing in low tones, apart from all the others.

Glasses were being emptied to the strangest toasts. The captain, who had looked at first like some impassive statue of a sea or river god, was growing animated, and laughing till his sides shook ; his mouth opened like a whale's jaws, and he began to say strange things in English, expanding into confidences sufficient to have hung him ; his conversation was gliding into the easy pirate vein.

When the *chola* retired to her cabin, he sent for a tattooed sailor, and had him undressed during dessert. This was in order to show me this tattooing, which depicted a fox-hunt.

It began at the neck, there were horsemen and dogs in full chase, gradually winding round his body in a spiral line.

" You don't see the fox yet, though," said the captain, with his most jocund laugh.

There seemed to be something so comic awaiting me in the discovery of this fox that the mere anticipation sent the captain into fits of laughter. The man was tipsy already, and the captain twirled him round several times, in order to point out the progress of this hunt ; on it went till it approached the man's loins, where it contracted, and was evidently about to end.

" See, here is the fox ! " cried the shaggy captain, half wild with delight, throwing himself back in an ecstasy, and roaring with laughter.

The hunted animal was run to earth, and only half his

body was visible. This was the grand final surprise. The sailor was then asked to take wine with us, in acknowledgment of his trouble.

It was time now to go on deck for a little fresh air, which was delicious now that evening was coming on. The sea was motionless as ever, and a light fell on it in the distance, where the sun's parting beams were reflected in the west. The men were dancing now, and a flute played them a jig.

As the whaler's crew danced, they stole furtive glances at us, half of timid curiosity, half of fierce contempt. They had the play of feature bequeathed to sea rovers by our primitive ancestors, droll gestures for every occasion, and a talent for mimicry, like all animals in a wild condition. Sometimes they drew themselves up and threw their heads back ; sometimes their supple nature and habitual tricksiness led them to bend down and arch their backs, like the great beasts belonging to the cat tribe when they walk forth in broad daylight. They were all twirling round to the strain of the childish jig played by this tiny flute, and they danced with great gravity, striking graceful attitudes with their arms and legs.

Yves and Goulven, however, still kept pacing to and fro, with their arms closely interlocked. They were trying to crowd in all they had to say to each other, making the most of this final conversation, because they knew I should soon be going. They had met once, fifteen years before, when Yves was but a lad, and Goulven had come to hide as an outlaw, and spend a day at Plouherzel. It was not likely they would ever meet again.

As we were looking on, we suddenly saw two of the dancers, who had taken each other by the waist, throw each other to the ground without relaxing their hold, and begin to struggle and gnash their teeth in a sudden fit of rage ;

they were trying to plunge their knives into each other's chests, and there were drops of blood already to be seen on the boards.

The shaggy captain parted them by lashing both with a hippopotamus hide.

"No matter," said he, "they are drunk!"

It was time to go. Goulven and Yves were exchanging embraces, and I could see that Goulven was shedding tears.

As we rowed back over the tranquil waters, and the first southern stars began to peep out overhead, Yves talked to me about his brother.

"He is not over-happy, though he is making a good deal of money, and owns a cottage in California, to which he hopes to return; but he is pining with home-sickness."

The captain had promised to come and bring his *chola* to dine on our ship next day. But the whaler put out to sea during the night, and vanished into space, so we saw no more of her.

## LXII.

"So you have come to claim your allowance, Madame Quémeneur?"

"And you too, Madame Kerdoncuff?"

"Where is your husband sailing now, Madame Quémeneur?"

"In China, Madame Kerdoncuff, on board the *Kerguelen*."

"So is mine, Madame Quémeneur; he is sailing in those very seas, on board the *Venus*."

This dialogue was being carried on at a startling pitch by two shrill voices in the Rue des Voûtes, Brest.

The street was crowded with women who had been waiting there since morning, at the door of an ugly granite building

which bore the inscription : SEAMENS' BANK. The women of Brest have learned to disregard cold and rain, and there they line the wall of this dismal little street under the grey fog, exchanging shrill observations, with their feet in the puddles.

This is quarter-day. They have formed in a line to receive their money ; high time too, for there was none left in any of the squalid lodgings in this large city.

These are women whose husbands are far away at sea, and they have come to receive the allowance these sailors have agreed to make them out of their pay.

Then they will go off at once to drink. There is a dram-shop opposite, which has been established expressly for the purpose, "The Matron," kept by Madame Pétavin.

Madame Quéménœur was a corpulent dame, with a flat face, pug nose, and massive jaws, and wore a waterproof and a black tulle bonnet with blue pompons.

Madame Kerdoncuff's complexion was of an unwholesome greenish hue, somewhat resembling a blue-bottle fly, and her meagre face was surmounted by a bonnet adorned with two big roses and leaves.

As the hour approaches, the crowd of drunken women increases. The bank is fairly besieged ; a wrangling is going on at the doors, and the window is about to open.

Marie, Yves' wife, is here too, in the midst of this promiscuous crowd, holding her little Pierre by the hand. She feels rather sad and timid, and shrinks instinctively from these women, as she makes way for those in greater haste, and keeps close to the wall on the sheltered side of the street.

"Pray come in, my dear, and don't let your pretty little boy stand there to get wet." These words proceeded from Madame Pétavin, who appeared in her doorway, her face eathed with smiles.

"Can I offer you anything? A drop of something sweet?"

"Thank you, madame, I never touch anything," replied Marie, though she stepped inside, seeing the room still empty, for fear of her little Pierre catching cold. "But if I am in your way, madame——"

Oh, no, not in the least, for Madame Pétavin was a good-natured soul, and begged her to take a seat.

Madame Quémeneur and Madame Kerdoncuff had been the first to get paid, and they entered presently, closing their umbrellas and seating themselves.

"Madame! Madame! Put a pint into two tumblers, and let us have it at once!"

Quite unnecessary to mention a pint of *what*; they meant a pint of strong brandy.

Then the two women went on talking. "And what is your husband doing on board the *Kerguelen*, Madame Quémeneur?"

"He is captain of the top, Madame Kerdoncuff."

"Just the same as mine, Madame Quémeneur! Captains' wives may well clink glasses together—Here's to your health, Victoire-Yvonne!"

They had already got so far as to call each other by their Christian names, and their tumblers were rapidly emptying.

Marie's clear glance rested on them as she turned suddenly to study them with as much curiosity as if they had been wild beasts at a show. Then she longed to be going. But the rain was still coming down in sheets outside, and the bank doors were still crowded.

"To your health, Victoire-Yvonne."

"To yours, Françoise!"

They will take another pint, and then they begin to exchange confidences. It is so hard to make both ends

meet ! More's the pity, but the baker can easily wait till next quarter ; as to the butcher, well, he must have something on account. This is pay-day, so why not enjoy themselves a little ?

“ Well,” said Madame Kerdoncuff with a coquettish smile full of significance, “ I am not so badly off after all, for you must know I have a retired seaman lodging with me, who is a quarter-master in the harbour.”

The speech is understood, and a similar smile appears on Madame Quémeneur's face.

“ Just like myself, I have a purser. To your good health, my dear Françoise ! If you only knew what a wag my purser is ! ”

And they continue to pour forth these intimate confidences.

Marie Kermadec rose. Could her ears have deceived her ? Many of the words they use were certainly strange to her, but their meaning was obvious when backed by such gestures. Could there be actually women who talked like this ? Out she marched, without looking back, or uttering a word of thanks ; she turned quite red, and felt the blood mantling to her cheeks.

“ Did you see how that girl blushed ? ”

“ Oh, she is but a country chit, you see ; she is still wearing one of those Bannalec caps, and knows nothing of the world.”

“ To your health, Victoire-Yvonne ! ”

The dram-shop is filling now. The women put down their umbrellas at the door, and shake their old waterproofs ; in they come and take their glass.

There are little children at home whining piteously, with wan faces that tell of cold or hunger. “ More's the pity—to your health, Françoise, this is pay-day ! ”

As soon as Marie got into the street, she caught sight of a group of women in big caps who had kept in the background,

and given way to the brazen-faced creatures who were pressing forward ; she joined them instantly, in order to feel herself in honest company once more. There were good old mothers among them who had come to claim their children's allowance, and stood under their cotton umbrellas with the stiff dignified air assumed by the peasantry when they come into town.

While awaiting her turn, she struck up an acquaintance with an old woman from Kermezéau, who told her the history of her son, a gunner on board the *Astrée*. In his early youth he had played just such pranks as Yves, and ended by becoming perfectly steady ; one must never despair of a sailor.

Yet Marie's indignation against these Brest women boiled so hot that she had just resolved on taking an important step : she meant to return to Toulven at any cost, on the morrow if possible.

As soon as she got home, she sat down to write Yves a long letter and explain her reasons for this decision. It was true that they should have to pay their rent at Recouvrance for another three months, and it would be some time yet before the cottage at Toulven could be finished ; still she would make it all up by thrift and industry ; she meant to begin to take in ironing, and gauffer the large collars worn in the country, a delicate operation which she understood well how to manage by employing a set of fine reeds.

Next she gave him an account of all little Pierre's last sayings and doings ; she expressed her great love for the absent man in very simple language ; then she fastened a lock of hair to the letter, which had been cut from a certain little restless brown head, and enclosed the whole in a thin envelope, addressing it

“To Monsieur KERMADEC, Yves,  
Captain of the mizzen-top on board the *Primauguet*, in the

southern seas, care of the French Consul at Panama, to be sent after the ship."

Her poor little letter, would it ever reach its destination ? Maybe, things more impossible have happened. In the course of five or ten months it might possibly reach Yves in a very soiled condition, covered with American seals, conveying to him his wife's strong affection and the lock of his son's brown hair.

### LXIII.

*May 1882.*

THAT evening the wind had begun to howl over these southern wastes of water. One long indigo coloured wave was chasing the other across all the surface of the vast expanse on which the *Primauguet* was sailing. The breeze was moist and chilly.

Down below, on the orlop deck, Le Hir, the half-wit, was working hard to get a corpse stitched up before nightfall in some pieces of grey canvas, which were fragments of sails.

Yves and Barrada were standing watching him with horror. They were obliged to keep close to him in a tiny mortuary chamber formed by hanging up some other sails ; a gunner was guarding the entrance, sabre in hand.

It was Barazère they were stitching up in this grey canvas. He had just died of a complaint he had caught at Algiers one night when he had gone out pleasureing. Several times he had seemed cured, but the ineradicable poison was in his blood, and kept reappearing till it made an end of him. For the last few days he had been covered with loathsome sores, and none of his friends would go near him.

Le Hir was the only one who would sew him up : all the rest refused for fear of infection. He had accepted the task because of the two pints of wine promised.

The roll of the waves kept pitching him about, hindering his work and disturbing the corpse, and he was eager to have done and get his wine to drink.

He began at the feet, which he had been instructed to sew up carefully, on account of the cannon ball which was to be fastened to them to make the corpse sink. Then he proceeded up the legs ; the body had disappeared by this time, enclosed in several folds of the coarse canvas ; nothing remained visible but the pale face, on which the repose of death rested, with a peaceful smile on his handsome features. Then Le Hir pulled a piece of the grey canvas roughly down over this also, and the face was veiled for ever.

This Barazère had some aged parents in a French village, who were looking forward to his return.

When the task was finished, Yves and Barrada left the mortuary, pushing Le Hir before them by his shoulders, in order to take him to wash his hands before they would let him drink.

They must have been comparing their ideas about death, for, as Barrada came out, he exclaimed in his strong Bordeaux accent—

“ Pooh ! men are like beasts, you see : others come instead, but as to those who are gone——”

And this speech ended in his own peculiar laugh, as deep and hollow-chested as a roar.

These words, coming from his lips, meant nothing irreverent, only he knew of nothing better to say.

The two men were heavy-hearted at the moment, mourning over Barazère. The disease at which they had taken fright was put out of sight and forgotten now ; the dead man had shaken off his final impurity, and lived suddenly as something nobler in their memory ; they saw him again as he had been in the days of health and strength, and their hearts grew tender as they thought of him.

The breeze was still blowing fresh and hard at sunrise next morning. The *Primauguet* was being driven rapidly forward in her course, her sides vibrating with the supple and vigorous bound peculiar to swift sailing vessels. On the forecastle the men of the watch were singing as they performed their morning ablutions. They looked like statues from the antique with their strong arms as they stood there stripped, washing themselves in cold water, plunging their head and shoulders into the deep tubs, covering their chests with a white lather, and then separating into couples, with the greatest simplicity, to rub each other's backs.

Suddenly the dead man came into their minds, and their merry songs died away. They had just caught sight of the relief watch coming on deck at their officer's order, and falling into line aft, as though for inspection. I could guess the reason, and joined them.

A large new plank had been placed so as to project beyond the bulwarks and balance upon them above the sea, and a very heavy object had just been carried up from below, a grey canvas sheath, bearing some resemblance to a human form.

When Barazère's corpse had been placed on the new plank, swinging above the foaming waves, every sailor doffed his cap, as a parting token of respect; a helmsman repeated a prayer, fingers made the sign of the cross,—and then, when I gave the word of command, the plank tilted, and a great splash followed.

The *Primauguet* never slackened speed, but left Barazère's corpse behind in the wide abysses of the Pacific Ocean.

Then I repeated to Yves, in low, reproachful tones, the words I had overheard the night before :

“ Men are like beasts—others come——”

“ Oh,” he replied, “ it was not I who said that, it was he,”

pointing to Barrada, who heard, and turned his face towards us. It was wet with scalding tears.

We still kept our eyes anxiously rivetted on the wake ; for if the shark were there, a patch of blood would rise to the surface.

Nothing, however, appeared ; so he had gone down to the depths in peace.

It would be a long, long descent, beginning with the velocity of a fall, and then gradually slackening, as it slowly reached the less dense waters beneath. A mysterious journey of some leagues into unexplored depths, where the vanishing sun will look at first like a pale moon, and then turn green, become tremulous, and vanish. Then the eternal shades commence ; the waters must rise higher and higher over the wanderer's head like a waterspout rising to the very skies.

But when the corpse reaches these depths, it is beyond the reach of corruption ; all material horrors are banished. In this absolute darkness it will be surrounded by the invisible inhabitants of the deep ocean ; mysterious madrepores will throw their branches across him, and slowly consume him with the thousand tiny mouths of their animated flowers.

The sailor's burial-place can no longer be violated by human hands. He who sleeps below is more truly buried than any other man ; no atom of him will ever come to light again ; his dust will never mingle with that on the surface of the earth, which is ever entering into fresh combinations in the constant struggle for renewed existence. His remains form part of this submarine life, and will pass into stone plants which are colourless, and shapeless creatures which have no eyes.

On the evening of the day on which Barazère's body had been committed to the deep, Yves brought his friend, Jean

Barrada, to my cabin. They were now the sole survivors of the old band. Kerboul and Le Hello had long been sleeping at the bottom of the ocean, cut off, like Barazère, in the prime of youth ; the rest had all dispersed to go on trading-vessels or return to their villages.

Yves and this Barrada were friends of long standing. When they were together on land, it would not do to cross their fancies.

I can see them now, seated in front of me, sharing the same chair because of the modest dimensions of my cabin, holding each other by the hand because of the habitual *roll*, and fixing their attentive gaze upon me. I was trying that evening to show them how men differed from the beasts that perish, and speaking to them about the mysterious life hereafter. With this death still fresh in their memory, they were listening with surprise and rapt attention, in the midst of the peculiar calm reigning at sea on an evening after a storm, a calm that predisposes us to understand what is incomprehensible.

I was but bringing up some old arguments I had learnt at school, sifting them afresh, working them out, and trying to make some impression on these youthful minds. This lecture of mine on immortality was possibly very stupid, still it did them more good than harm.

#### LXIV.

THESE seas on which the *Primauguet* was still sailing were almost always of the same lapis-lazuli tint ; it was in the region of the trades and perpetual summer.

Sometimes we had to cross the line in order to go from one group of islands to another, and then we passed through

the great motionless waters and dreary equatorial splendours.

By and by, when we again felt the influence of the refreshing trades in one or the other hemisphere, the *Primauguet* seemed to rouse and scud before the breeze, and the contrast of this swift motion made us appreciate the delight of bounding along on this great trembling creature, which seemed half alive, answering instantly to the helm as she sped forward.

When her prow was turned to the east, she was sailing as near as she could to the wind in this region of the trades, and then the unwearied *Primauguet* cut through the regular crested waves of the tropics day after day, with the same little joyous flutter, like a fish enjoying the waters. Then, as we returned, with the wind at our back and all sails set, our rapid pace became such an easy gliding motion, that we seemed to be flying, poised in the air like a bird.

These days were very monotonous for the sailors. Every morning they were seized with a great fever of cleanliness as soon as ever the hammocks were down. The instant they were awake, up they started, and off they ran to wash decks. Without any clothes, wearing only their tufted caps, or at most a tiny woollen bib almost like an infant's round their neck, they set to work to swill everything. The hose were set going, and buckets full of water swung by their strong arms. They dashed it about over their legs and backs, splashing and drenching everything, upsetting whatever came in their way to souse it, and then setting to work to rub and scrub the well-scoured deck with sand, in order to make it look still whiter.

This was interrupted by their being ordered up to the yards to make some alteration in the sails or to take in a

close reef, as it was not the custom to go into the rigging as they were. They dressed hastily, and executed their task as quickly as possible, in order to come down and enjoy themselves again in the water.

All this strengthened their arms and expanded their chests ; even their feet, owing to this habit of climbing barefoot, became sometimes slightly prehensile like those of apes.

Towards eight o'clock, when the drum beat, these washing operations were obliged to come to an end. Then they set to work to polish, while the scorching rays of the sun swiftly dried up all the moisture ; every bit of brass or steel, down to the very ring-bolts, was rubbed till it shone again. Each man seized on the little block or other object intrusted to his charge, and began to rub with all his might, drawing back from time to time with the air of a connoisseur to see how it looked. And all around them nothing was to be seen but the great blue horizon, the magnificence of infinite solitude, always the same.

Nothing passed us but the giddy shoals of flying fish, so rapid in their course that we could see nothing but the glitter of their wings. There were several kinds : the commonest were the large steel-blue, but there were smaller and rarer sorts shading into lilac and crimson ; the flutter of red took us by surprise, and when we tried to get a glimpse of them, it was too late ; a small patch of the sea was still palpitating and sparkling as if a shower of small shot had been pelting down ;—this was where they had disappeared beneath the surface, but the creatures themselves were no longer to be seen.

Sometimes a frigate-bird, a great mysterious creature always seen by itself, would appear far above our heads, sailing rapidly with its delicate wings and scissor-like tail, and keeping a straight line as if it had some goal in view. Then

the sailors pointed out the rare passenger, following him with their gaze till he was lost to sight, and the incident was entered on the log-book.

No sail however ever came across our track ; these southern seas are too vast to admit of such meetings.

Yet time did not hang heavy on our hands : the day slipped by in work and various amusements.

At certain hours, on certain days previously fixed by the ship's regulations, the sailors were allowed to open the canvas sacks in which they kept their things. Then they began to lay out all their odds and ends with a comical solicitude, and the deck of the *Primauguet* seemed suddenly converted into a bazaar. They opened their workboxes and arranged dainty patches on their clothes, which soon got worn by the continual play of their muscles ; some of them actually took them off and sat down gravely to mend the shirt they had been wearing ; others ironed their deep collars by extraordinary methods, such as sitting on them for a length of time ; others took from their writing-desk little faded yellow sheets, bearing the stamps of various Breton or Basque villages, and began to read : these were letters from mothers, sisters, or sweethearts, in those remote villages.

Then, when the whistle sounded in a special manner, which meant "Put away sacks !" everything disappeared as if by magic ; everything was folded up, fastened and stowed away again in the hold, in the numbered pigeon holes which the terrible sergeants-at-arms came to secure with iron chains.

Their patient sensible manner might easily have deluded any one who did not know these sailors ; no one who saw them thus engaged, like little girls, in unpacking their play-things, would ever have imagined what sort of young men they could show themselves when once on land.

There was but one hour of inevitable sadness, when the

evening prayer had just been said, and the Bretons had finished crossing themselves, and the sun had set; at this hour the thoughts of many turned to their distant homes.

Even in these regions of marvellous light, there was always this melancholy twilight hour. At that time, the sailors' heads involuntarily turned towards the last band of light still visible low in the west, almost touching the water.

This band was always shaded, passing from dark red on the horizon into a narrower streak of orange, then into pale green, and a phosphorescent gleam, and finally melting away into faint grey and the shades of night. Some few, dull yellow gleams still played on the sea before it assumed its neutral tint for the night. There was something half sinister in the oblique parting beam cast on these solitary abysses, and the expanse of water produced an involuntary shudder. This was the time for strange yearnings and feverish struggles. A feeling would come across these sailors that they were leading an odd unnatural sort of life, as they dwelt on their wasted sequestered youth. The distant image of some woman would flit before their eyes, endued with many a charm; or else a sudden revolt of the senses would lead them to dream of some reckless feast and indulgence in drink into which they meant to plunge when they next found themselves free on land.

The true balmy starlit night soon followed however, and the passing impression was forgotten; all the sailors sat or lay on the forecastle, and began to sing.

Some of them knew capital long songs with a chorus, and the other voices joined in, ringing out with a fine effect through the sonorous stillness of the night.

There was an old mate, too, who had endless yarns to

spin to an attentive audience, of adventures that had actually happened, once upon a time, to handsome mariners, whom enamoured princesses had carried off to their castles.

The *Primauguet* still flew on, leaving a faint white track behind her in the darkness, which gradually melted away like the tail of a comet. On she flew, night after night, never stopping to rest or sleep ; only her great wings looked no longer white, like those of a gull, but assumed a bat-like outline by night, as though they were sketched in Indian ink on the lighter background of the heavens.

However fast she sped, she still found herself surrounded by the same vast circle, which seemed perpetually renewed and extended as it followed her. Sometimes the circle looked black, and formed a distinct line just stopping short of the first stars, or else the immense contour was softened by vapours, blending all into one indistinguishable mass ; then one could imagine oneself plunging into a blueish-grey vault, dotted with countless stars, feeling astonished only at never encountering its receding walls.

The air was filled with faint sounds from the water, ever resounding, though in a subdued manner ; there was a vague yet mighty noise, such as might be produced by thousands of stringed instruments lightly touched by mysterious bows.

Occasionally these southern constellations began to emit startling flashes of light ; the great nebulae sparkled like ground mother-of-pearl, all the shades of night seemed to become transparencies, strange lights shone out as if it were some grand fairy illumination, and one felt tempted to ask the reason for this brilliancy, what was about to happen ? Nothing ; it was simply that we were in the region of the tropics. There was nothing around us but these vast sheets of water and the empty horizon.

These summer nights were exquisite, balmier than ours in

June, and they perturbed the peace of our crew, who were all men under thirty.

These soft shades brought with them amorous desires. They felt ready to yield again to dreams ; they longed to stretch out their arms to some object of desire, but there was none near. They were forced to realize their solitude, draw themselves up, pace up and down the hard deck, divert their thoughts and try to sing. And so they went on trolling out their sad and mirthful ditties in the midst of the ocean.

Yet it did them good to be on the forecastle during these nights at sea ; the fresh night breeze played on their chests, the virgin breezes which have never swept across the land to carry any living germs, and have no odours. As they lay there, they gradually lost all sensations except that of speed, which is always enjoyable, even when we have no object in view and cannot tell whither we are going.

These sailors had no object and knew nothing about their destination. What should they care, when they were never allowed to land ? They knew nothing about the goal of their rapid course, nor the boundless extent of the solitude surrounding them on all sides ; but it amused them to be sailing on so swiftly in these dim blue shades. As they trolled their songs at evening, they kept their eyes fixed on the bowsprit, protruding its two tiny horns so far forward, and bounding over the waves, skimming the foaming surface as lightly as a flying fish.

## LXV.

My dear Yves' conduct was as irreproachable on board the *Primauguet* as he had promised. The officers treated him with more deference because of his bearing and manner,

which had already become superior to his standing. Yet, in spite of this, he still kept his place in the front ranks of that rugged band, of whom the boatswain declared with pride : "They are like sharks, not one of them knows what fear is."

He had resumed his old habit of stealing into my cabin during the evening, at the hours when I placed it at his disposal. He would sit down and begin to read my books or papers, knowing that he was welcome to look at whatever he liked ; he learned to understand marine charts, and amused himself by marking points on them and measuring distances. He wrote frequently to his wife, and sometimes, when he chanced to be called away by his duties, his notes got mixed up with mine. One day I found one which was evidently intended to travel under a second cover, for it was addressed thus :—

"To MADAME MARIE KERMADEC,

At her parents' house, Trémeulé in Toulven, Brittany, Township of Wolves, Parish of Squirrels, on the right hand side of the road, under the biggest oak."

It was hard to fancy this big Yves writing such childish nonsense.

This was his first long absence from Brittany since his marriage. Now that he was far away, his thoughts began to dwell on the young woman on whom he had already entailed so much suffering, and who had loved him so dearly ; at this distance he began to regard her under a novel aspect.

In July, which is the worst month of winter in the southern hemisphere, we left the region of the trades to go as far as Valparaiso.

Here I was to quit the *Primaugeut* and return to France

on a large sailing-vessel, which had been round the world, and was now bound for Brest.

She was called the *Navarin*. All the men on board the *Primauguet* whose term of service was completed were to go home on her too ; amongst others, Barrada, who was returning to Bordeaux with his gold-lined belt, to marry his little Spanish bride.

I parted from Yves very suddenly, as usual, again commending him to everybody's care, and sailed back to France, doubling Cape Horn.

## LXVI.

*October 20, 1882.*

WELL do I remember this day, spent in Brittany, when I ran about with Marie and Anne in the Toulven woods under a cloudy sky.

With my mind still full of the sun and azure sea, I took this sudden peep at Brittany, just as I might have done in a dream on shipboard, and I felt as if I had never properly understood its charm before.

Yves was still in the Pacific Ocean. It was strange indeed to think of his being so far off, and to find myself once more in these Toulven lanes without him !

We ran wildly about these green lanes under the overcast sky, all three of us, the women's big caps fluttering in the wind. Night was close at hand, and we were trying to make the most of the last hour of daylight to gather ferns and Breton heather for me to take back to Paris in the morning. Alas for these partings, always so sudden, changing everything, casting their shadow on what we are leaving behind, and sending us forth to encounter the unknown !

It was again the melancholy season of late autumn, the air

was still mild, and the country looked green, even after the emerald tropics, but the Breton sky still looked grey and gloomy, and there was a scent of dead leaves suggestive of winter.

We had left little Pierre at home in order that we might be free to run faster. We gathered the last foxgloves, pink catchflies, and scabious by the roadside as we tore along.

Under the dim green shades of the hollow lanes we came across old men with drooping locks, and women wearing cloth bodices embroidered with rows of eyes.

There were mysterious openings where paths met in these woods. Wooded hills rose one above the other in monotonous lines in the distance, the usual horizon in this Toulven district, whose age is lost in obscurity, the same on which the eyes of the Celts must have rested, the extreme distance melting into neutral grey or deep indigo.

Oh, my dear little Pierre, how I clasped you in my arms when I reached the Toulven road ! I was a good way off when I first saw the little fellow running towards me, bounding like a kid, though I did not at first recognise him. He had been told, "There is your godfather coming along the road," and off he ran to meet me. He had grown and improved in appearance, and his manner had become bolder and louder.

It was on this occasion that I had my first and last glimpse of little Yvonne, Yves' daughter, who was born after we sailed, and only remained on earth for a few months. She was extremely like him ; she had just his eyes and his look. It was curious to see a tiny creature bearing so strong a resemblance to a man.

One day she again took flight to the mysterious regions whence she had come, summoned home suddenly by some childish malady which neither the old midwife nor the "wise

woman" of Toulven understood. They laid her in the graveyard adjoining the church, and the eyes so like Yves' were closed for ever.

We spent our two hours of daylight in these woods, and it was not till after supper that Marie and I went by moonlight to see how their new house was getting on.

Its four walls had risen from the ground on the site of the field of oats which we had measured in the June of the previous year. As yet it had neither pentroofs, floors, nor roof, and looked like a ruin in the moonlight.

We seated ourselves on some stones inside, and found ourselves for the first time together alone.

Of course we talked about Yves. She questioned me anxiously about him and his prospects for the future, believing that I really knew more than she did of the husband whom she adored. Trembling, without understanding, I tried to reassure her, for I had good hopes. This wild fellow had a brave, good heart, and if we could work on him through that, we were sure to succeed in the end.

Anne, who had stolen near to listen, suddenly made her appearance now, and startled us by exclaiming :

" Oh Marie, change your place this instant; if you only saw how hideous your shadow looks from behind ! "

We had not noticed it, but as the moon shone on her head only, and the lappets of her cap fluttering in the wind, it formed on the new wall behind her the image of a very large and ugly bat. This was quite enough to bring us ill luck.

The bagpipes were playing in Toulven. In order to return to the inn, to which both sisters were intending to escort me, we were obliged to pass through an unexpected scene of gaiety, over which the moon was presiding. There had been a grand wedding, and open air dancing was going on in the market-

place. I stood with Anne and Marie to see the long chain of the gavotte turn and run, to the shrill music of the bagpipe. The women's caps looked whiter than ever under this beautiful moon, as they flew past us like a whirlwind, and the men's embroidered breast-plates and silver spangles glittered as they passed.

At the other end of Toulven we found another crowd. It did not seem natural to find the village so animated at night. There were more caps running and pressing in, to get a better view. A band of pilgrims on their way back from Lourdes were singing hymns as they entered the village.

"There have been two miracles, sir; the news came by telegram this evening."

I turned round and found it was Pierre Kerbras, Anne's sweetheart, who was giving me this information.

The pilgrims passed, with their great rosaries hanging round their necks; the last were two infirm old women who had not been cured, but were carried home by some of the young men.

Next morning, old Corentin, Anne, and little Pierre came in their Sunday best to take me in Pierre Kerbras' *char-à-bancs* as far as Bannalec station.

I found two old English ladies already installed in the railway compartment I entered.

Little Pierre was hoisted up to the window that I might kiss his pretty, sunny, peach-like cheek, and he burst out laughing when he caught sight of a tiny pug-dog the ladies were carrying in the travelling-bag engraved with their armorial bearings. He was very sorry I was going, but still the tiny dog in the bag was so comical that he could not help laughing. The old ladies smiled too, and said that little Pierre was "a very beautiful baby."

Thus I bade a long farewell to Brittany ; I had spent twenty hours in it, and the following morning I found myself already far away.

## LXVII.

## A LETTER FROM YVES.

“ MELBOURNE, *September 1882.*

“ DEAR BROTHER,—I write to tell you that we have reached Australia ; we have had a beautiful passage, and are to leave to-morrow for Japan ; you know we had orders to make a short cruise in those seas.

“ I found two letters from you here and two from my wife ; but I shall be very eager to read the one you write me after you have been down at Toulven.

“ Dear brother, the officer who has replaced you is just like yourself, very kind to the men. As to the one who came in M. Plunkett’s place, he is rather harsh, but not with me. M. Plunkett told me he would put in a word for me when he left, and I think he must have done. The others and the surgeon are just the same ; they often speak to me about you and ask after you.

“ The captain has ordered me to act as second mate since we threw poor Marsano, the Nice sailor, overboard ; he was found dead in his hammock one morning when the men took them down. I like my work very much.

“ Dear brother, the sailors were twice allowed on shore, at San Francisco, but you may be sure that as you were not here, I would not even set down my name to go with them. I must tell you that our men had a grand row with some Germans the second night, and their knives came into play.

“ I may also tell you, dear brother, that the card over your cabin-door has not been removed, and I believe it will never

be ; so I take a turn aft round the orlop deck in order to pass in front of it.

“When we come home next year, I hope to get leave to go down and see my wife and little Pierre, and my little daughter too ; but I can have but a short time with them at best, and certainly I shall never rest easy till I am able to retire from the service. On the other hand, when I am old enough to leave off my blue collar, my little Pierre will be nearly ready to enter the navy in his turn, or else there may be a corner ready for me by the side of the pool, near the church : you know what I mean.

“Dear brother, will you think I am imitating you ? I assure you it is not so, I always had these thoughts.

“As to the cocoa-nut heads,\* I think they are lost, for we shall not be going to New Caledonia ; still, later on, I might happen to touch there and buy some. If you happen to come by the Gulf of Juan, I should be so glad if you would go to Vallauris and buy me two of the candlesticks they make there with heads like *French parrots*.† I should like to have some in my house ; I do so long to be fitting it up, brother.

“Among the many things which distress me when I awake, the worst is that my mother will not come to live at Toulven. If I could only get leave and go to fetch her, I feel as if she would let me bring her. But then, on the other hand, I should have no one left at Plouherzel, and that is another of the things I don’t like to think of ; for we belong to Plouherzel, you know. If I could only believe what you have so often told me about there being another life after death, I feel sure I should be a happier man. But after all, I

\* Hideous human heads which the New Caledonian convicts manufacture out of cocoa-nuts, adding eyes, teeth, and hair. Yves wanted some to put on his staircase, at Toulven.

† Candlesticks in the form of owls.

could see that you don't quite believe in it yourself. It seems odd however that I should be so afraid of ghosts, and I believe you are too, brother.

"I hope you will excuse this dirty sheet of paper, it is not altogether my fault ; you see I have not your desk now to write my letters on like an officer. I was writing this by night in tolerable comfort on the lockers in the forecastle towards the end of my watch, when that idiot, Le Hir, knocked my candle over. I have not time to write the small hand I do sometimes, which you admire. This has been dashed off in a great hurry, and I hope you will excuse it.

"We sail for Japan at daybreak to-morrow, but I shall send my letter by the pilot who will take us out.

"I must conclude, with my fondest love.—Your brother,  
"YVES KERMADEC.

"Dear brother, I cannot tell you how much I love you.—  
"YVES."

## LXVIII.

*December 1882.*

I WAS passing along the quay at Bordeaux, when a very well-dressed man came up to me, raising his hat and holding out his hand. Who should it be but Barrada ! Barrada, perfectly transformed ; he had got rid of his black beard and one-and-thirty years, as well as his blue collar ; with his closely shaven cheeks and budding moustache, he looked like a young lover of twenty.

His features still looked noble and his face handsome, but it had acquired a better and softer expression, as if from some hidden spring of joy.

He had married his little Spanish bride at last ; the gold

in his belt had enabled them to start house-keeping, and he had taken to loading vessels, a very lucrative business, it seemed, in which his great strength and talent for arranging things were brought into play. He made me promise faithfully that, when the *Primauguet* came home, I would run down to Bordeaux with Yves and pay him a visit.

What a happy fellow he looked !

The end of this sea-rover gave me food for reflection. I asked myself whether my poor Yves who, with just as good a heart, had certainly sinned less against the laws of morality, might not bring his career to as happy a termination.

## LXIX.

TELEGRAM.—“Toulon, April 3, 1883. To Yves Kermadec, on board the *Primauguet*—Brest.

“You are appointed second mate. Congratulations.—Pierre.”

This was his cheery welcome on his arrival ; for the *Primauguet* had only just returned from her cruise on the distant waters of the Pacific, and been anchored in French waters for four-and-twenty hours only.

Yves did not water the gold lace stripes I announced by telegram as he had once done his woollen ones. No, times had changed ; he retired to the orlop deck, to a nook he considered his private domain, where his sack and locker were ; he made his escape there at once, that he might realise his good fortune all by himself, and con over the delightful bit of blue paper which pointed to the dawn of a new era.

It was so grand, and so unexpected after his past misconduct !

I had gone to Paris to ask this favour, and pulled every secret string on behalf of my adopted brother, for whose

future conduct I offered to be responsible. A kind-hearted woman had been good enough to bring her powerful influence to bear, and thus, in spite of many difficulties, Yves' promotion had been carried.

There seemed many different aspects of good fortune attached to Yves' success. To begin with, instead of having to ask for a short leave, which might perhaps have been conceded half grudgingly, his gold lace would entitle him to go down to Toulven at once; he would not be attached to any vessel for three, possibly not for four months; he would have the whole summer before him to spend with his wife and son, in the cottage that was now finished, and only waiting to be furnished. And then they were about to have ample means, which would be no drawback either.

Never, in the whole course of his hard wandering life, had he known such a happy hour, or felt such pleasure, as when his brother Pierre sent him this telegram.

## LXX.

WHEN the winds waft me back to Brittany, it is always towards the end of May, in the sweetest part of the Breton spring.

Yves has been down at his Toulven cottage for six weeks already, arranging my room, and making everything ready against my arrival.

The vessel on which I am sailing has left the Mediterranean, and is sailing northwards to enter Brest harbour and be disarmed.

*May 18. At sea.*—We can feel that we are approaching the Breton coast. The weather is still fine, but calm and melancholy as it is in Brittany. The smooth sea looks a pale

blue, the salt breeze is fresh and smells of seaweed ; everything seems veiled by a faint blue mist, very transparent and very dull.

At eight o'clock this morning we doubled Penmarch'h Point. The Celtic granite outlines and tall dreary cliffs are gradually coming into sight and becoming clearer.

Now we can see layers of mist—but very aerial, summer mist—resting on the distant horizon whichever way we turn.

By one o'clock we pass the Toulinguets, and soon after enter Brest.

*May 19.*—Leave of eight days. By noon I am seated in the railway carriage on my way down to Toulven.

It rained all the way over this Breton landscape. The meadows and wooded valleys were all full of water.

I had to drive an hour through the woods to reach Toulven from Bannalec. I kept looking on in front, trying to discern the granite spire of the church through the green vista.

At last it came in sight, clearly mirrored in the desolate sheet of water at its base. It was fine again, and there was a pale blue sky overhead.

Here I was at Toulven ! The carriage stopped. Yves was there to meet me, holding little Pierre by the hand.

We looked at each other, and both burst out laughing at the other's moustache. It altered our appearance, and made us look so droll. We had not seen each other since permission had been issued to sailors to wear it. Yves volunteered his opinion that it gave us a more knowing look.

Then we kissed each other.

How handsome little Pierre had grown, and so tall and strong too ! On we walked together through Toulven, where the good people knew me now and came to their doors to see me go by. We passed down the narrow grey street, with

its ancient houses and massive granite walls. I recognised the old woman with the owl-like profile who had presided over my godson's birth, and she nodded to me through the open window. The big caps and collars and the spangled bodices came to light in deep recesses, standing out against dark backgrounds ; and all these things gave me that impression of a bygone age which is peculiar to Brittany.

Little Pierre could walk like a man now, and on he trotted, holding a hand of each of us. He was a little shy at seeing me again, and had not talked at all ; but he began to chatter away now, raising his little round face to mine, as if I were a friend to whom he could communicate his ideas. I had not heard much of the sweet little voice before. It had a strong Breton accent.

“ Godfather, have you brought my sheep ? ”

Fortunately, I had remembered a promise made the year before ; the sheep on wheels was in my trunk for my little Pierre. And I had brought some candlesticks likewise, with *French parrots' heads*, which I had promised to my other big child, Yves.

Here was the white cottage, looking so fresh and new, with its window-frames of Breton granite, its green pentroofs, the loft with the dormer window, and the woods for a background.

In we stepped. Marie and little Corentine were awaiting us downstairs, in the kitchen with the wide fireplace.

But Yves begged me to come upstairs at once, for he was eager to show me their pretty white room, with its muslin curtains and polished cherry-wood furniture.

Then he threw open a second door.

“ And here is your room, brother ! ”

He looked at me anxiously to see the effect produced by

all the trouble he and his wife had taken to arrange everything to my taste.

I entered with much emotion. My room was all white and deliciously scented ; there were flowers all about, which they had gone to a great distance to get for me ; tufts of mignonette and large bunches of sweet peas in the vases on the chimney-piece, and the grate was filled with heather.

They could not bring themselves to furnish it with old Breton furniture after all, and apologised, saying they had been able to find nothing good or nice enough. They had gone to Quimper to buy me a cherry bedstead like their own. It is a light wood, of a cheerful reddish tint. The tables and chairs were to match. The smallest details had been carefully attended to ; drawings once done by myself hung on the walls in gilt frames, with a large photograph of the pierced belfry at St Pol de Léon, which I had given Yves in the days when we sailed together on the foggy seas.

The planks of the floor looked like new wood.

“ You see, brother, we keep it all white as if we were on board ship,” said Yves, who had himself whitewashed and scoured everything with the greatest care, and took off his shoes every time he went up, lest he should make a mark on the stairs.

I had to see everything and inspect every corner, including the loft, in which the potatoes were stored and wood piled for the winter, and the passage from the landing, in which, like a sailor’s *ex-voto* in one of the Virgin’s chapels, hung the miniature boat made by Yves during his leisure moments in his mizzen-top on board the *Primauguet* ; and then the garden, where strawberry plants and lettuces were beginning to sprout by the side of the newly made walks.

Then Yves, Marie, little Corentine, little Pierre, and I, sat down to dinner, served on a very white table-cloth. My

brother Yves turned suddenly very shy about presiding, so I found myself obliged to carve, and made a great hash of it too, never having tried my hand before.

During this dinner I ate to please them ; but I was feeling strangely touched by the complete happiness I found at my elbow, of which I was, to some slight extent, the author, and by the heart-felt gratitude lavished upon me. These rare experiences had for me a delicious air of novelty.

“ You must know,” said Yves, addressing me confidentially, “ that I go to mass with her now on Sundays.”

And he made a comical little grimace of child-like submission at his wife, which contrasted oddly enough with his grave demeanour. His whole manner towards Marie was completely changed, and I had seen at once that love had taken up his permanent abode in the new house. So now my dear friends had nothing left to wish for ; as Yves said, all they wanted was to stop the finger on Time’s dial, in order to prevent the great delight of their realized dreams from taking wing.

The pair were silent, too, in their happiness, as though afraid of scaring it away if they said too much, or took it lightly. And then we had the departed to talk of, little Yvonne who went home last autumn without waiting for the *Primauguet* to return, and was never seen by Yves, and then, poor old Corentin, his father-in-law, who died in chilly December.

Marie spoke of him : “ He was a very sweet-tempered man, sir ; but he became very irritable towards the end. He told us we did not know how to nurse him, and kept calling for his son Yves : ‘ Oh ! if Yves were but here, he would help me and lift me in his strong arms to turn me in my bed ! ’ The last night he was with us he did nothing but call for him.”

Then Yves struck in—"And what grieves me most when I think about father is, that we had a little difference about that division of property the day I left, you remember. You can't think how often it comes back to me now."

We had finished dinner, and the long warm May evening had commenced. Yves and I walked in the direction of the church to visit a white cross at the head of a mound covered with flowers.

YVONNE KERMADEC, AGED THIRTEEN MONTHS.

"They say she was the very image of me," observed Yves. And this resemblance between himself and the little dead child made him very pensive.

As we gazed on this cross and mound and the flowers, we both meditated on the mystery of this little daughter, who was flesh of his flesh, had eyes like his, and probably a kindred soul, and was now laid in this Breton soil. It was as though some part of himself had already been claimed by mother earth ; as if he had rendered tribute already to the dust of ages.

Four years hence, this little cross, now visible from afar, would no longer exist—Yvonne, with her mound and flowers, would be removed. Even her tiny bones would be mingled with those of her forefathers, in the bone-house beneath the church.

For four years, however, this little cross would still remain, and the little girl's name be read.

It lay close to the pool, and its image was reflected in the deep pool, aside of the lofty grey spire. There were tufts of white pinks on the mound, which were already fading from sight in the gathering twilight. The pool looked like a pale yellow mirror, the colour of the sunset sky, and all around stretched the dark line of thick woodland.

The flowers on the graves gave forth their fragrance in the evening air. The tranquil balmy atmosphere seemed to grow heavy.

Owls might be heard hooting in the distance, and Yvonne's white pinks were no longer visible. The summer evening had closed in.

Then a loud noise suddenly startled us, breaking the silence which made us dwell in spirit with the dead. It was the Angelus bell ringing just above our heads, filling the air with its loud metallic vibrations.

Yet we had noticed no one enter the church ; the door was closed, and it looked dark.

“ Who is ringing ? ” said Yves uneasily, “ who can be ringing ? I would not be the man to do it,—no, indeed, I would not enter the church at this hour for all the gold in the world ! ”

We left the graveyard ; it was certainly too noisy ; the Angelus sounded strange, and awoke unexpected responses from the sleeping pool, the graves, and the darkness. We had no fear of this poor little mound with its white pinks, but there were others, grassy hillocks which lay around us and contained unknown forms.

*Ten o'clock.*—I am going to sleep for the first time under my brother Yves' roof. It has just struck ten, we have wished each other good night, and here he is at my door again.

“ I have come for the flowers. They might be bad for you ; we have just thought of it.”

And he clears them all out, mignonette, sweet peas, and roses, even down to the bunches of heather.

## LXXI.

THE finger on Time's dial has been moving on rapidly, and my week's leave has nearly come to an end.

We have been in the woods every day. The weather has been magnificent, and the heather, foxgloves, and pink catchflies are all in flower.

There was a great *pardon* on Sunday, one of the most noted in this part of Brittany ; it was held round the chapel of Notre Dame de Bonne Nouvelle, which lies all alone in the midst of the woods, as if it had gone to sleep in the Middle Ages, and remained forgotten ever since.

The day before, Yves, little Pierre, and I had happened to come and seat ourselves in the shade, close to this church, during the tranquil noonday hour. It was a very quiet spot, overhung by the interlaced branches of great mossy oaks and venerable beeches.

Two women came up, one young, the other very old and infirm : they wore the Rosporden costume, and seemed to have walked a long way. They carried large keys in their hands, and had come to open the ancient sanctuary, kept closed during the rest of the year, and to make the altar ready against the morrow's festival. We could see them through the dim green light of trees and windows, pressing round the old saints to dust and wipe them, and then sweeping the pavement, which lay thick with dust and saltpetre.

At the feet of Our Lady, some one had charitably laid a human skull, found in the wood. It was cleft and covered with green mould, and its two dark cavities seemed to be gazing at us from the further end of the chapel : " What is it, Godfather ? Did you say it was found in the ground ? "

Little Pierre feels a vague uneasiness at the sight of this

novel object, as though it were a first revelation to him of a dismal order of things existing beneath the surface.

The weather was rather dull, yet charming all the same, on the day of this *pardon*.

For ten hours the bagpipes never ceased playing in front of the chapel, under the giant oaks, and the chain of the gavotte wound to and fro over the mossy sward.

The touch of melancholy hanging over these Breton summers is difficult to describe ; it is a compound of many things : the charm of these long warm days, which are fewer in number here than elsewhere, and more swiftly fled ; the fresh tall grass, with its wonderful profusion of pink flowers ; and then the faint suggestion of bygone days which cleaves to everything.

Oh ! this ancient district of Toulven, thick woods in which that northern tree, the sombre fir, mingles with the oak and beech ; Breton landscapes that seem to belong to a remote age ; huge stones covered with grey lichen as fine as an old man's beard ; plains on which the granite crops out, plains purple with heather !

This country gives me a peaceful feeling of rest, and leads to aspirations after a more perfect rest beneath the moss, under the shade of these chapels in the forest. With Yves these feelings are more vague and hard to express, but they are even more intense, as were mine when a child.

No one seeing us seated now in these woods, enjoying these calm summer days, would ever imagine what sort of young men we once were, the kind of life we led, nor the terrible scenes that used to take place between us in those early days when our two widely different, yet kindred natures, first came into conflict.

Every evening, during the short twilight, we play at a very amusing Toulven game with little Pierre ; it consists in taking each other by the chin, and telling a long story with

a very grave face. "By Minette's beard, I hold you. Whichever laughs first,"—and so on. In this game, little Pierre is always the victim.

Then come the gymnastics. Yves swings his son round, head downwards, with his feet in the air, holds him at arm's length, and tosses him up: "Come, little Pierre, how soon do you mean to have arms like mine? Tell me now!"

"Oh never, never! I shall never go through enough to get arms like yours, I'm sure, father."

And when Yves has ruffled all his hair and tired himself out with romping, and says in his sober style as he readjusts his dress, "There now, little Pierre has finished his gymnastics," the child comes to me, with the smile which wins him all he wants: "Come, godfather, it is your turn now, isn't it?" And then we go through it all again.

## LXXII.

TIME's relentless finger has again moved on; a few hours now, and I shall be gone, and before long my brother Yves will be going too, both of us to encounter an unknown future.

This is the last evening, and Yves, little Pierre, and I are on our way to the old Keremenen cottage, that I may take leave of Marianne, the grandmother.

She is living all alone now under her mossy roof, overshadowed by the great oaks. Pierre Kerbras and Anne were married last spring, and are having a stone house built in the village, like Yves. All the children have left the old roof.

The poor old thatched cottage about which those fine caps and white collars flitted so joyously on the day of the christening! That is all past and gone; it is very silent and

empty now. We take our seats on the old oak benches, and lean our elbows on the table where we once feasted so gaily. The grandmother is sitting on a stool, with her head bent over her distaff, spinning ; she is already beginning to look aged and infirm.

It is dark inside, though the sun has not yet sunk very low. We are surrounded only by poor old-fashioned things that have been handed down from generation to generation. Some rude rosaries are hanging on the unhewn granite of the walls, and in the dark corners oak logs may be seen piled ready for the winter, and black and dusty domestic utensils, of quaint old-fashioned shapes.

We had never realized so fully how remote all this seemed from our own day. It was a bit of the old Brittany so rapidly passing away.

The light from the sky above penetrated down the chimney, casting a greenish tone on the hearthstones, and through the open door we could catch a glimpse of the Breton lane, with a beam from the setting sun playing on its ferns and honeysuckles.

Yves and I felt very dreamy during this call at the grandparents' cottage.

To begin with, Marianne could talk nothing but Breton. Now and then Yves addressed her in this ancient tongue ; she answered, smiled, and seemed to like to look at us ; but the conversation soon flagged, and they relapsed once more into silence.

There is a vague sadness about the evening, as we dream of bygone days in this old cottage which will soon lie in ruins by the wayside, like its aged inmates, and never be built up again.

Little Pierre is there with us. He is very fond of this cottage, and the old grandmother, who dotes on him and

spoils him. He is especially fond of the little oak cradle, an heirloom from another century, in which he was laid as soon as he was born. He is longer than his cradle now, and sits in it, using it as a sea-saw, while his large dark eyes wander about and notice everything. Then his grandmother bends over him, stooping under her frilled collar, to rock him herself. She sings as she swings him to and fro, and his gay childish laugh mingles sometime with her shrill croon.

*Boudoul galaichen ! Boudoul galaich du !*

Sing your ancient cradle-song in your poor tremulous voice, old woman; it is an air handed down from many a generation long past away, and your grandchildren will forget it.

*Boudoul, boudoul ! Galaichen, galaich du !*

One half expects to see dwarfs and fairies come down the wide chimney as well as the light from the sky overhead. Outside the cottage, the sun is still gilding the oak boughs, and the ferns and honeysuckles. Inside, in this lonely cottage, everything looks dark and mysterious.

*Boudoul, Boudoul ! Galaichen, galaich du !*

Rock your grandson, old woman in your white collar! Breton songs and ancient Bretons alike will soon have passed away.

Presently little Pierre clasps his hands to repeat his evening prayer. He keeps his eyes fixed on us as he repeats, word for word, in a very sweet voice, with a strong Toulven accent, all the French his grandmother knows—

“Oh God, oh good and holy Virgin, oh good St Anne, I pray for my father and mother, for my godfather, for my grandparents, for my little sister Yvonne——”

“For my Uncle Goulven, who is far away on the sea,” adds Yves in a solemn tone, and then, still more thoughtfully—

“For my grandmother at Plouherzel.”

"For my grandmother at Plouherzel," repeats little Pierre. And then he waits with clasped hands for something else to repeat.

But tears are ready to start to Yves' eyes at the sudden thought of his mother and her cottage, and her village of Plouherzel, which his son will hardly remember, and he himself may never see again. Such is the life of sailors, these children of the coast—away they go, separated, by the nature of their calling, from the beloved parents, who scarcely know how to write to them, and whom they are often fated never to see again.

I look at Yves, and as we understand each other without words, I can guess the nature of his thoughts.

For the present he is happy beyond his dreams, many gloomy things in the past have been driven away or overcome, but—what is to follow? He has suddenly become absorbed in some strange, melancholy brooding over the past and future, and what will come next?

*Boudoul galaïchen! boudoul galaïch du!* sings the old woman, with her bent back and white ruff.

What is to follow? Little Pierre is the only one laughing; his strong, lively, bronzed face turns first on one side, then on the other; high spirits and bright young life are sparkling in his large dark eyes.

What is to follow? It is quite dark in this deserted cottage; the things inside seem to be holding mysterious converse with the past; night is about to fall on the thick woods around us.

What is to follow? Little Pierre will grow up and go to sea, and I and my brother shall pass away, so will all those we have loved, our old mothers first, and then all the rest, including ourselves; old mothers in Breton cottages as well as those in towns, and old Brittany itself, and everything in this world!

*Boudoul galaichen ! boudoul galaich du !*

Night is falling, and a sudden sadness takes possession of us. And yet, we are happy to-day !

Out we both go, leaving little Pierre with his grandmother, and wander down the green lane overhung by the oak and beech, still hearing in the distance through the evening air the old-fashioned cradle rock, and the sounds of the old lullaby and childish laughter.

Outside, it is still broad daylight, and the sun, which is fast sinking, gilds the peaceful landscape.

“ Let us go as far as the chapel of St Eloi,” said Yves.

This is an ancient building on the top of the hill, clothed with moss and fringed with hoary lichen, which lies all alone, locked up in the heart of the woods, with an air of mystery clinging to it. It is only opened once a year, for the *horse pardon*, when the animals are brought and stationed all round the building, while a low mass is said within for their benefit. This *pardon* had been held recently, and the grass still showed the marks of hoofs.

It was singularly quiet all around this evening. The wooded horizon lay tranquil in the distance, as if sleeping ; we felt as though the evening of our life had come too, and eternal rest was awaiting us, as we watched the shades of night descending over this Breton landscape ; we seemed to have nothing to do but lie down and take sweet repose with slumbering nature.

“ And yet,” said Yves meditatively, “ I believe I shall return down there (meaning Plouherzel), when I grow old, in order to be laid near that Kergrist chapel which you may remember my showing you. Yes, I feel sure I shall go down there to die.”

That Kergrist chapel in the Goëlo district, under the gloomy sky, with the salt water lake and the granite islets in the centre, the great crouching beast sleeping in the midst of

the grey plain ! I could picture the scene as I saw it once, some years ago, one winter's day. I remembered that is Yves' own country, the ground under which he means to sleep ; it is there he dreams of being buried when he is far off on the ocean, at night, or in peril.

Yves, my brother, we are but grown-up children, often very merry when there is no reason, and now rambling off into sadness because of a chance moment of peace and happiness ; our only excuse is that this is something so very unusual with us.

“ And yet, to see us now, who would ever suspect us of dreaming with our eyes open, merely because night is closing round, and these woods are so silent ? ”

“ Remember, we are both on the verge of two-and-thirty ; we may have a long life before us yet, with voyages, dangers, and anxieties ; there is sunshine in store for us still, and intoxicating pleasures, and some love, and, who knows, possibly scenes, and conflicts, and rebellions again between us two ! ”

This was expressed in far fewer words than I have given here, while my brother was still dreaming.

Then with a sadly reproachful look, he made reply :

“ At any rate, brother, you know I have really altered, and that *one thing* belongs to the past ; you are not alluding to that, are you ? ”

Upon which I clasp my brother Yves' hand, and try to smile as if I felt perfect confidence.

Oh ! that we could arrest an actual life at a given moment, as we do its story in a book !

THE END.

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